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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

FEDERAL PUBLIC SECTOR LABOUR RELATIONS ACT

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (for the President of the Treasury Board) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-62, An Act to amend the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act and other Acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports by the delegation of the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, the APF.

The first is respecting its participation at the bureau meeting and the 42nd ordinary session of the APF held in Madagascar from July 8 to 12, 2016.

The second is respecting its participation at the meeting of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee of the APF held in Benin on May 3 and 4, 2017.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 40th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 40th report later this day.

[*English*]

PREVENTION OF RADICALIZATION THROUGH FOREIGN FUNDING ACT

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-371, An Act respecting the prevention of radicalization through foreign funding and making related amendments to the Income Tax Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present my very first private member's bill, the prevention of radicalization through foreign funding act. This legislation would provide a powerful tool to stem the flow of funding from foreign groups that promote radicalization and extremism in Canada.

[*Translation*]

This bill deals with the so-called secret laws relating to the funding of organizations and institutions in Canada that support radicalization.

Security experts and anti-radicalization representatives, including members of the Muslim community, are calling for greater scrutiny of funds intended to support radicalization.

[*English*]

The bill sets out a schedule of foreign states, extending to individuals and entities that suppress religious freedom, impose punishments for religious beliefs, or have engaged in or facilitated activities that promote extremism, terrorism, and radicalization. Canadian individuals and institutions would be prohibited from accepting money or gifts from any state, individual, or entity listed on the schedule.

My sincere hope is that the government will see the practical value of the bill and give it full and thoughtful consideration.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-372, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (pension plans and group insurance plans).

Standing Order 52

She said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce my first bill in the House today, a private member's bill that seeks to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

This bill seeks to correct the injustice faced by retired workers whose pension plans and group insurance plans are not protected when their company goes bankrupt or undergoes restructuring.

I will do everything in my power to ensure that this bill receives royal assent, that way, we can help prevent retirees, like those from my riding who are here today to support me, from losing their pensions, and improve the existing legislation by giving pension plans' unfunded liabilities preferred creditor status, among other things. I hope my colleagues will be supporting this bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1010)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 40th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who stayed at Wilderness Park in Dowling, Ontario, located in the spectacular riding of Nickel Belt. The petitioners call upon Parliament to ensure that campgrounds with fewer than five full-time year-round employees be taxed as small businesses.

[*Translation*]

LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions, petition 421 and petition e-587, which call on the government to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

[*English*]

SHARK FINNING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present three petitions this morning. The first petition deals with an issue that this House has debated but has not yet taken action on, which is the sale, distribution, and trade of shark fins in Canada. Sharks around the world are endangered, and the petitioners ask the House to deal with what is illegal in Canada,

which is the finning of sharks, and extend it to the trade in shark fins, which is not illegal.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, many petitioners are calling upon the government to go farther than Bill C-48, which is currently before the House, with respect to a tanker ban on the north coast of B.C. The petitioners ask that a ban on crude oil tankers extend through B.C.'s entire west coast.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners in the last petition call upon the government to extend employment insurance sickness benefits to 52 weeks for Canadians who are battling cancer and other critical illnesses.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

The Speaker: I have received notice of an application for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the American administration's desire to abolish supply management constitutes an unprecedented threat to Quebec agriculture.

By calling for the abolition of our agricultural model, American negotiators are out to get our dairy farmers and poultry producers. This is happening right now. Canada's negotiators need to walk away from the negotiating table any time supply management is mentioned.

The urgent nature of this debate is quite clear. We need to take action in the House today. We will not allow the Americans to destroy our agriculture. This is a fundamental issue for Quebec, and quite frankly, for the rest of Canada too. We voted unanimously on a motion to fully maintain supply management, which is currently being threatened. We will not allow that. We have had enough of the ridiculous demands of the American administration. Once the Americans are ready to get serious and negotiate a free trade agreement that works for everyone, they will come back to the table, but for now, we need to send a clear message. We will not allow anyone to destroy our agricultural sector.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Mirabel for raising this important matter. However, I find that the request does not meet the exigencies of the Standing Orders at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1015)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MINISTER OF FINANCE'S DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

That, given accusations by experts that the Minister of Finance's family business, Morneau Shepell, stands to benefit from the proposed changes outlined in "Tax Planning Using Private Corporations" and assurances by the Minister that he has abided by his Public Declaration of Agreed Compliance Measures with respect to his family business, the House request that the Minister table all documents he submitted to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner between November 4, 2015, and July 18, 2017.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister of Canada has awesome powers to help or hinder individual businesses, particularly those businesses that deal in products like pensions. A minister of finance knows beforehand about government decisions that move markets and push individual companies up or down, and his decisions can impact the direct bottom line of companies in which everyday Canadians invest and for which they work. No one in government has more power over taxation, regulations, tariffs, subsidies, or government bond auctions, all of which have direct impact on the fortunes of individual businesses.

He who has the most control over the nation's finances should have the most transparency over his interests. From those to whom much is given, much is asked. We give ministers the power to impact the lives of everyday people. We expect that they prove they are exercising those decisions in the public interest and not the private interest. This is especially true of the Minister of Finance, for whom these powers are so vast.

We are not dealing with an ordinary Minister of Finance. His father built a billion-dollar financial services firm. According to last available insider trader reports, the current finance minister held over \$30-million worth of shares in that fine family business as of 2015. Since he became minister, he stopped disclosing his holdings, which is greatly ironic: we knew more about his interests before he was finance minister than we do now.

Public filings with the insider trading reports ensured that he, as a corporate executive, was accountable to his shareholders. He now has no similar accountability to the 35 million shareholders we call Canadian citizens. This company is of direct interest to the minister's department.

I will read from the Morneau Shepell website:

Morneau Shepell is the largest provider of pension administration technology and services in Canada. We offer a full range of solutions from software to full outsourcing of pension administration.

Business of Supply

Who regulates pensions in Canada? It is the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. To whom does that office report? Why, it is the finance minister, and that office regulates "...1,200 pension plans".

Interestingly, if we go to the Morneau Shepell website, it makes direct reference to that office, saying that the office appoints Morneau Shepell to wind down the pension plans of bankrupt companies. If a company pension plan is going under, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions needs someone to oversee the pension. In the meantime, it picks from a variety of providers. Of course, there is a financial benefit to whoever is selected, and Morneau Shepell brags on its website that it offers its own services to this office that reports directly to the finance minister.

There are broad and sweeping regulations at a national level to federally regulated pension plans. Of course, Morneau Shepell offers those pension plans. Pension plans also purchase government bonds. The finance minister sells government bonds.

• (1020)

Every year we have new issuances of government bonds as the government runs deficits and needs to borrow money and past bonds come to maturity and need to be renewed. They are sold to institutional investors, such as pension funds, of which Morneau Shepell is one. The finance minister's family business buys government bonds and the finance minister sells government bonds.

Then there is the issue of taxation. The finance minister, of course, is responsible for setting tax policy for the whole country. That is important for everyone, but especially for companies whose interests and activities are so dramatically impacted by tax levels and tax rules. Allow me to provide one example.

The minister proposed in his July 18 consultation paper to double tax the investment income private businesses earn within their companies. The result is that many of them would be forced to take their retirement savings out of their private companies and put them into individual pension plans, a unique and not well-understood product. A few Canadians hold them, and far fewer companies offer them. One of those companies is Morneau Shepell. The minister might say that he did not take that into consideration when he made his public policy proposal, but we do not know that, because we are not familiar with what holdings he continues to possess.

Furthermore, the minister has defended Canada's 40-year-long tax treaty with Barbados. That treaty allows Canadian companies and wealthy individuals to pay only 2.5% tax in Barbados and to then ship the rest of their profits back to Canada tax free. The minister's family business has registered a subsidiary in Barbados to take advantage of exactly those favourable tax conditions, so the finance minister is responsible for reviewing a tax treaty with a tax haven where his family business has a subsidiary.

Business of Supply

Here is what we know about the finance minister. His father built a billion-dollar family business. As of 2015, the finance minister was receiving employment income from that family business, and as of that same year, he had \$30 million in shares in that company. Since he has become minister, we no longer know if he holds on to those shares, and it is not because the minister has not been asked. He has been asked on probably a dozen occasions, and he simply refuses to answer. For the longest time, most people thought he could not answer. It is in a blind trust, so he would not know.

On Twitter late last week, I had an exchange with the Liberal member for downtown Toronto, who came leaping to the finance minister's defence by saying that the money is obviously in an arm's-length blind trust, so how could the minister possibly know where his money is, as it is all blinded to him. I do not blame that Liberal member for saying that, because most of the press gallery thought exactly the same thing. Everyone just assumed that if a finance minister has shares in a financial company, they would have to go into a blind trust.

Through two weeks of intrepid investigative journalism, *The Globe and Mail* finally was able to extract the fact that the minister does not have a blind trust, so he knows what he holds. He knows his assets. He knows what they are. Why will he not tell everyone else? Some might suggest that this is an intimate, private detail that we could not possibly ask someone to volunteer to strangers. That is an odd response, given that he was, as a corporate executive, forced to reveal exactly the same facts. Am I the only one who finds it peculiar that a corporate executive had a higher standard of public transparency than the Minister of Finance?

An hon. member: You are not alone.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: I am not alone, Mr. Speaker.

• (1025)

I think most Canadians would think that the man who directs our taxation regulations, subsidies, tariffs, and financial regulation policy in this country, and is responsible for \$300 billion of public spending, would have a higher degree of public disclosure than a corporate executive. However, those who would expect that would be wrong, at least under the present government.

I found this particularly surprising, because when I was a parliamentary secretary, I opened a very meagre stock portfolio. I will not say exactly how much, but it was well shy of \$30 million. I know the members of the House are shocked to hear that. I am the son of two teachers. The reality is that I did not have \$30 million. I went to the Ethics Commissioner, and she said, "Yes, I am afraid that is going into a blind trust." At the end of the day, I put that in a blind trust for as long as I held it and maintained that blind trust separate and out of my control.

We think a parliamentary secretary should not be able to know what he or she owns in the stock market. Why on God's green earth would we expect it to be appropriate for the finance minister to own tens of millions of dollars of interest without either putting it into a blind trust, divesting it altogether, or at the very least, telling the public what he holds?

During the Paul Martin era, he owned Canada Steamship Lines. I thought it was particularly egregious the way that finance minister

arranged his affairs, reflagging his ships to avoid paying the same taxes he imposed on other Canadians. At least we could debate those facts in the Martin era, because we knew them. He, at least, to his credit, made clear to Canadians that he had this massive shipping empire under his command, and then subsequently under the command of his children while he was pulling the financial strings of the country.

Today we are expected to just trust the finance minister and assume he wants us to have blind trust in him, even though he does not have a blind trust himself. This is the same minister who already broke the requirements of the ethics act by covering up his offshore corporation in France, which owns his villa there, a villa that may produce rental income. That, of course, would not be taxed in Canada, because it would be held in that shell corporation offshore. Meanwhile, the minister wants to impose higher taxes on private corporations here in Canada, the mom and pop grocery stores that cannot afford the lawyers and consultants to set them up with offshore companies in France. They will pay higher taxes on their passive income while his policy allows him to continue to accumulate riches abroad, out of the reach of the same tax system he would impose on everyone else.

Going back to the parliamentary secretary, when that member from downtown Toronto told us over Twitter that his minister had a blind trust, someone asked him why. He responded that it is the "laaaaaaaaaw", with nine letter *a*'s to emphasize the importance of the law. I honestly believe that the member thought the minister would have to have a blind trust to function in any kind of ethical environment and avoid conflicts of interest.

We should all turn our thoughts to the junior staffers in ministers' offices who make modest middle-class incomes and have to put their \$5,000 RRSPs in blind trusts. What must they think of a minister on the front bench who not only cannot be bothered to respect the same principle but who thinks he is entitled to hide his interests and potential conflicts from the Canadian people who pay his salary? That is emblematic of the kind of entitlement the millionaire finance minister and the millionaire Prime Minister have come to possess.

• (1030)

I understand why they would be out of touch. They do not appreciate that everyday Canadians do not have multi-million dollar trust funds handed down to them from their grandparents and their parents. The Prime Minister has been very blessed with what he likes to boast of as his family fortune. His grandfather ran an oil and gas empire, and the Prime Minister today is still living off the fruits of his grandfather's hard work and labour. The finance minister has been very blessed to come from a family that built a billion-dollar family business. Both of them are very well taken care of by these family trusts they enjoy and the inheritances that have been passed down to them. I do not begrudge their families their success, but I ask that they hold themselves to the same standard as everyone else.

Business of Supply

Average Canadians pay higher taxes under the government. We saw how the finance minister and the Prime Minister meticulously designed a tax increase, targeted at local businesses and family farmers, that would protect their family fortunes. The billion-dollar family business of the finance minister, Morneau Shepell, is publicly traded, so it faced no new taxes under this latest attack on small businesses. The Prime Minister went out and boasted to the media that his family fortune would not be affected by any of the tax increases. Meanwhile, the hard-working entrepreneurs who started with nothing and built their way from the ground up were expected to pay taxes as high as 71%.

It is as though the finance minister and the Prime Minister were at the top of a castle wall looking down at the peasants and pulling up the ladder so that nobody could climb and join the court. This is the imagery the government creates when it protects the aristocratic wealth of the Prime Minister and the finance minister and prevents everyone else from having an opportunity to build a brighter future for themselves the same way the finance minister's father and the Prime Minister's grandfather were able to build for their families.

This comes back to the essential debate we are having in this country. On the other side, we see a desire for a government-run economy. Do not get me wrong. People are able to get rich; it is how they get rich. In a free market economy, people get rich by having the best product. In a government-run economy, people get rich by having the best lobbyists. A free market economy allows people to get ahead on merit. In a government-run economy, people get ahead on connections. In a free market economy, people can only be better off if they sell things that are worth more to them than what they paid for them. In a government-run economy, people get ahead by using political power to transform itself into financial power.

A free market system has allowed literally billions of people around the world to escape grinding poverty and achieve a better future for all. It is the greatest poverty-fighting machine ever invented. It is the best system we know. We understand that the government across the way does not believe in it. It believes in a government-directed economy, where insiders get ahead using their political power, where the power of force is used to extract money from the pockets of people who have earned it and to put it into the hands of those who have not.

Ours is a struggle for the hard-working middle-class people who put in a hard day's work for a better life. We ask that the Prime Minister and the finance minister prove that they share that same goal by revealing to all Canadians the vested interests they possess so that all of us can ensure that they are acting in the public interest and not in their narrow private interests.

•(1035)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite has used a lot of time and resources in focusing on the finance minister, but on this side of the House we focus on Canadians.

Last week, the same member waxed poetic about facts and the finance minister and I want to give Canadians some facts: fact, Canada's economy is growing faster than it has in more than a decade, in fact, at one of the strongest rates in the G7; fact, over

400,000 jobs have been created since we have taken office, most of them full-time jobs; fact, unemployment is the lowest it has been in more than a decade.

What would the hon. member say to his constituents who are benefiting from these facts?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct in pointing out that the Prime Minister and finance minister have been given great fortune. The previous government left a balanced budget and a growing economy, the strongest balance sheet in the G7 by far and the lowest debt. That strong financial situation has, of course, allowed Canada to withstand the damaging policies that the Prime Minister has so far enacted over the last two years. We also see a much faster growing global economy, one in which the United States and the rest of the world are finally starting to recover from the original financial crisis that the Conservative government was able to help Canada withstand.

That great fortune is landing in the lap of the Prime Minister and the finance minister, and they have a lot of experience inheriting great fortunes. The question is what they will do with it. Will they return to a balanced budget? Will they lower the tax burden so that hard-working people can continue to earn a better life for themselves and their families? Will they build upon the Conservative record, which reduced poverty to its lowest level on record and resulted in the biggest increase in median incomes on record? Will they build upon that successful low-debt, low-tax record, or will they squander this fortune they have inherited?

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition's motion today is clearly of interest to Canadians. I do not know if "regret" is the right word, but it is lamentable, I suppose, that we need to spend a day in Parliament asking for something that should have been clear and obvious when the finance minister took on the most important job in the cabinet, outside of the Prime Minister's job. There has been a pattern with the finance minister.

Maybe I am naive, but I think many Canadians believed the finance minister two years ago when he suggested that he would put his wealth into a blind trust. I believed him, because that was the obvious thing for a finance minister to do. Paul Martin did that, as well as a succession of finance ministers, because if they are wealthy and have assets that could be impacted by the decisions they make as finance ministers, the only way to shield themselves from ethical violations, either perceived or real, in which they would benefit from their ministerial decisions is to put all their assets into a blind trust, as the Prime Minister did. I believe the health minister and other ministers in the current cabinet did, like previous cabinets did.

Business of Supply

Today the Conservatives are requesting access to what the Ethics Commissioner was told. I believe those conversations, by their nature, need to have some element of privacy so that people can divulge information to the commissioner, and because MPs have to share a lot of personal information with her. If one has held a senior position in a private company like Morneau Shepell, one would have to divulge a great deal of personal information about one's shares and when those shares get sold. There is also legal counsel within a company to advise about the sale of shares. With Equifax recently, we saw senior management of a company that was in a lot of trouble suddenly start selling shares.

However, on the political side, is there perhaps a gap in the way that our ethics and conflict of interest legislation is designed that something like this could happen, whereby, in a private meeting with an Ethics Commissioner, finance ministers could simply choose not to put things into a blind trust and choose, in that way, to expose themselves to a conflict of interest?

I concern myself with the larger conversation in this country, which is our economy, how things are managed, and how a finance minister could continue to do his job when he is shrouded in this much personal controversy of his own making. Do we need to strengthen the way that disclosures happen so that the obvious and ethical thing happens each and every single time, not just by that person's particular choice?

• (1040)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, there are two issues here. One is, did the finance minister follow the law? The second is whether the finance minister is acting in the public interest.

Let us start with the law. The finance minister appears to have broken the law in failing to report his offshore private corporation in France. With respect to the \$30 million in shares he owned and may still own in Morneau Shepell, he may or may not be in compliance with the law. However, it is not enough to follow the law; that is the bare minimum. It is not enough for him to say, "Oh, I found a loophole, I do not have to report what I own because I managed to slide it into a family trust or I stashed away those shares in a private corporation and therefore they are out of public view. That loophole protects me from transparency."

That is not enough because the second standard I mentioned is the public interest. Consequently, even if the minister has found a way, with all the best lawyers and consultants and lobbyists, to benefit from a loophole from the law—loopholes are something he was attacking not so long ago—he still has to uphold the public interest. That is his duty in this place. Our role is to uphold the public interest, and the only way we can do that in this case is if he is transparent about his private interests.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Carleton, eloquently spelled out the issues here today and the high ethical standards all members should strive for.

I have to address the comments by my friend, the Liberal MP for Whitby, who recited with dramatic effect a number of facts. I will recite a fact and I would like the member's comment on it. The fact is that the MP for Whitby, when responding to all small business owners on this issue, said, "Let me start by apologizing to each and every entrepreneur, small business owner, physician, and constituent

in the Town of Whitby for the tone and the language that was used during the roll-out of these proposals." She apologized for the tone because that finance minister has tried to play groups of Canadians off against each another, tried to suggest that all small business owners are somehow part of the wealthiest 1%, the Prime Minister's favourite phrase in this House.

Could the member for Carleton inform this House why he thinks these ethical lapses and questions go to the heart of the confidence we can have in the finance minister when he is playing groups of Canadians off against each another, yet not even abiding by the basic ethical standards required of MPs in the House? That is a lack of confidence, by his own conduct. I would like the member's comments.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it is particularly galling that the finance minister would hide his own multi-million dollar investments from Canadians after he has travelled across the country, wagging his fingers at pizza shop owners, plumbers, and family farmers. He has called them tax cheats. He said they have tried to game the system to avoid paying their fair share. He has accused them of using loopholes. Now he is the one who is looking for a way around the rules to prevent Canadians from knowing what interests he holds. He is not prepared to hold himself to the standard he imposes on everyone else. Where I come from, that is called hypocrisy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind hon. members that the Minister of Finance has been working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that he is abiding by all her recommendations and every conflict of interest law and that every appropriate measure is in place.

The commissioner conducted a thorough review before issuing her recommendations, which the minister followed. The Minister of Finance has full confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and in her recommendations. He is prepared to take any measure deemed necessary by the commissioner in order to avoid any conflict or any perceived conflict.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has the full confidence of Parliament with regard to her ability to do her work with impartiality, integrity and independence. On this side of the House, we respect the commissioner's independence. This is the opposition's attempt to distract from what our government is doing for small businesses and the middle class.

Business of Supply

Let us talk about that. I am pleased to rise in the House to go over what our government is doing to improve tax fairness, reduce inequality, and foster inclusive growth. Earlier this month, the government concluded its consultations on its proposals for resolving the issue of tax planning using private corporations. Throughout these consultations, we listened to Canadians from across the country. It is fair to say that the federal government's consultations made it possible for a record number of Canadians to be heard. The Minister of Finance received more than 21,000 submissions and met Canadians from St. John's to Vancouver at roundtables and town halls as well as online forums. I also know that many members of all parties, especially Liberals, did the same thing.

As the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, I personally met with many Canadians, including small business owners, farmers, and industry representatives to discuss these proposals. On behalf of the Minister of Finance, I would like to thank the many people who participated in the discussion. I especially want to thank them for their frank and extensive dialogue, which will help the government strike the right balance in carrying out its promise to improve tax fairness in order to help the middle class and to achieve inclusive growth.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced the steps the government plans to take to further support Canada's small businesses. I will talk about this announcement in a moment, but first I would like to remind my hon. colleagues how we got to where we are today.

First and foremost, I would like to assure all members that the government is committed to guaranteeing a healthy, business-friendly economic climate, as well as protecting the ability of Canadian businesses to invest, grow, innovate, and create jobs. In the two years since we came into office, more than 400,000 jobs have been created, most of them full-time. These results are due in part to strong economic growth and the sound investments our government has made in our economy and our society.

Our fiscal position is better than forecast in March. In fact, for the fiscal year that ended on March 31, we had a budget deficit of \$17.8 billion, which is \$11.6 billion less than was forecast in 2015. Ours is currently the fastest-growing economy by far in the G7.

The results for the second quarter this year showed that the economy grew by an impressive 4.5%. Over the past four quarters, our economy has grown at the fastest rate since the beginning of 2006. The policies we have put in place since we came into office, which include investing in infrastructure, giving more money back to the middle class, and implementing the Canada child benefit, have been praised worldwide for stimulating the economy and giving middle-class Canadians greater flexibility.

• (1045)

[English]

This strong economic growth is proof that the plan we put in place two years ago is working. We began laying the foundation for this economic growth the moment we took office. The first thing we did when we started our mandate two years ago, as people may know, was to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could cut them for nine million Canadians. This middle-class tax cut has been benefiting nine million Canadians, and we are proud of that. Single individuals

who benefit from this tax cut are saving an average of \$330 each year, and couples an average of \$540 each year.

Our government has also made child benefits more generous and better targeted to those who need them the most. With the new Canada child benefit, we have lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. Since July 2016, nine out of 10 Canadian families with children are receiving more in child benefits than they did under the previous system.

We also expanded the Canada pension plan to ensure Canadians would be better off financially in their retirement. The strengthened CPP will provide more money to Canadians when they retire, so they can worry less about their savings and focus more on enjoying time with their families.

• (1050)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask you to bring the member to order over relevance. The nature of today's motion is the appearance of a conflict of interest and calls upon the finance minister to table documents in the House, not to discuss the minister's track record.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): As I have mentioned before in the House, I really do trust the MPs in the room to come around and actually talk about the issue at order. Often I have heard many speeches go off on a tangent that I am not really sure where they will go, but then they bring it back. I will accept that comment, but I will leave it to the MPs to keep it on topic.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had listened to my introduction, he would know that I mentioned that the Minister of Finance worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and that he will continue to do so in order to be fully compliant with all her recommendations at all times, as he has done from the start by working transparently.

As I said in the introduction, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner did a thorough review of the minister's file before he took office, and the minister followed her recommendations. We believe that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner always acts in a perfectly honest and independent manner, and we respect her independence.

I would like to speak more specifically to the good work that the Minister of Finance does for Canadians.

Business of Supply

[English]

Strengthening the CPP will increase the maximum benefit by about 50% over time, giving retired Canadians a more dignified retirement.

Now we are moving on to the next step in our plan to grow the economy and achieve better tax fairness for middle-class Canadians and those working hard to achieve the middle class.

We will be the first to point to small business as being one of the reasons the economy is growing the fastest in the G7.

[Translation]

Our government is committed to ensuring that businesses can prosper in Canada. In keeping with that commitment, I am pleased to inform the hon. members in the Chamber that the Prime Minister announced the government's intention to lower the small business tax rate in 2019, while presenting proposals intended to fix a tax system that is inherently unfair for the middle class.

The government intends to lower the small business tax rate to 10% as of January 1, 2018, and then to 9% as of January 1, 2019. These tax cuts are in recognition of the importance of small businesses to the lives of Canadians and of their contribution to the Canadian economy. Small businesses are a key driver of the Canadian economy. They represent 98% of all businesses and are responsible for over 70% of all private sector jobs.

Low corporate tax rates are meant to promote capital investment in business and growth in Canada. These investments, whether they are for the acquisition of more efficient equipment or technology or for the hiring of additional personnel, make companies more productive and competitive.

These investments also stimulate economic growth and help create jobs and raise wages. However, as the government lowers taxes for small businesses, it must ensure that Canada's low corporate tax rates support businesses rather than give unfair and objectionable advantages to a small number of wealthier and higher-income individuals, who use private corporations as a tax planning tool. That was not the intent of the measure.

Our current tax system encourages the wealthy to incorporate so that they obtain a tax advantage. This means that, in some cases, a person who earns hundreds of thousands of dollars a year may benefit from a lower tax rate than a middle-class worker who earns much less. That is not fair, and our government intends to remedy that situation.

This week, the government is introducing the approach it intends to take to better target tax strategies used by a relatively small number of high-income individuals, who benefit the most from existing tax rules. To do so, we are relying on the feedback Canadians provided during our recent consultations on tax planning using private corporations. We have heard from Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We are a government that believes that consulting with Canadians and members of Parliament is a good thing and that it helps us to strike the right balance.

In the coming weeks and months, our government will announce the next steps in its plan to resolve the issue of tax planning using

private corporations, a plan that reflects the comments we heard during our consultation period.

With every one of the changes the government makes, it will do the following: support small businesses and their contributions to Canada's communities and our economy; keep taxes low for small businesses and support owners to actively invest in their growth, create jobs, strengthen entrepreneurship, and grow our economy; avoid creating unnecessary red tape for small business owners, who work hard, as we know; recognize the importance of maintaining family farms and work with Canadians to ensure we do not affect the transfer of a family farm to the next generation; conduct a gender-based analysis on finalized proposals to ensure that any changes to our tax system promote gender equity.

As the Prime Minister confirmed at his announcement yesterday, the government is introducing a new proposal designed to limit the ability of a small number of owners of high-income private corporations to reduce the personal tax they have to pay by sprinkling their income to family members. However, the government intends to simplify its proposal on income sprinkling to guarantee that the changes we are proposing do not add any unnecessary red tape. We must emphasize that the vast majority of private corporations will not be impacted by the proposed income-sprinkling measures. In fact, we estimate that only 50,000 family-owned private businesses are sprinkling their income. This is a small fraction, around 3%, of Canadian-controlled private corporations.

We are making changes in order to eliminate the tax advantages that only wealthier individuals with access to the services of accountants can enjoy. We have listened to small business owners, professionals, farmers and fishers, and we are going to act on what we have heard in order to avoid unexpected or undesirable consequences.

This simplified proposal addresses the concerns we heard during the consultations. We heard that our initial proposal was too complicated and caused uncertainty among family members.

We also heard the concerns of family businesses, especially those involved in agriculture or the fishery, about our proposals to limit the lifetime capital gains exemption. In light of the feedback we received from Canadians, we will not for the moment implement any measures that would limit eligibility for this lifetime exemption. We will also continue to carefully examine all the comments that the government has received.

Business of Supply

•(1055)

[English]

In addition to the middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit I mentioned earlier, I would like to highlight some of the government's other key achievements to help support middle-class Canadians.

[Translation]

For example, over the last two years the government prioritized the movement of people and goods by making historic investments in our infrastructure. The government made long-term investments in our infrastructure because it believes it to be crucial to the future of our country and our economy. That is why, in our first budget, we committed \$11.9 billion over five years to support public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

Also, in the 2016 fall economic statement, we announced a further \$81.2 billion that will go towards critical infrastructure over a period of 11 years. These funds will support public transit, green infrastructure, social infrastructure, transportation that supports trade, Canada's rural and northern communities, and its smart cities. These are investments that improve the way Canadians live, commute and work.

These public transit investments will help Canadians benefit from a faster commute, reduced air pollution, more access to well-paid jobs, and stronger economic growth. These investments reflect Canadians' commitment to one another and to future generations.

We will have even more work to do going forward. Part of the work will involve making changes to create a fairer tax system for the benefit of all Canadians, one where hard-working small business owners are rewarded for their efforts, and big businesses are able to grow, create jobs, and contribute to our country's growth.

Our announcement yesterday means greater support for small and medium-sized businesses. In these times of economic growth, Canadians need to share the fruit of that growth, and they deserve it.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to sincerely congratulate the member for Louis-Hébert who is now the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. We have the pleasure of being neighbours in the Quebec City area. He is a feisty politician for whom I have a great deal of respect and with whom I really enjoy crossing swords.

Perhaps he has not noticed, but I would point out to him that his two predecessors are currently cabinet ministers. I am quite certain that the member for Louis-Hébert did not notice that, so I wanted to point it out. In all sincerity, I really respect my colleague.

Now let us really get to the heart of the matter. The parliamentary secretary said a number of things that are worthy of closer scrutiny, particularly the facts. He said earlier that his government had introduced budget measures that leave more money in the pockets of families and that make the wealthy, the infamous 1%, pay more in taxes. The facts say otherwise.

First of all, the Fraser Institute published a study two weeks ago that found that 80% of families are now paying \$840 more than when we were in government. Also, with respect to the Liberal

government's so-called attack on wealthy Canadians, the infamous 1%, the Department of Finance found, on page 16 of a study tabled last week, that there is \$1.2 billion less in the government coffers, basically because of those of us who are better off.

Does the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance agree with the Department of Finance, which found that the wealthy have ended up paying less tax under the Liberal government?

•(1100)

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words. We are neighbours in the Quebec City area, and I enjoy working with him. With regard to his comment that I am a feisty politician, perhaps he is somewhat responsible for that. As for my future, I will leave it to his consideration. Personally, I am focusing on what I have to do now, which is to support the Minister of Finance in his work to create inclusive growth in Canada.

The numbers speak for themselves. When we took office in 2015, growth was slow, and investments were needed in infrastructure. Interest rates were low, and there were pressing needs in our cities and across the country. We thought it was the right time to invest in infrastructure to stimulate this growth, and that is what we have been busy doing since we were elected. The municipalities, particularly in Quebec, applaud the government's approach.

The other part of our plan was to reduce inequality and to provide as much support as possible to those who need it most, by cutting taxes for the middle class and bringing in the Canada child benefit, which gives \$454 million annually to families in the Quebec City region, where the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent is from. Nine out of ten families in the Quebec City area are getting an extra \$2,300 a year, tax free, which is good for small businesses and good for growth. We know that this has a direct impact on growth.

That is why the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and economists the world over are applauding Canada's approach. The proof is in the pudding. Growth in Canada is at a record high, the highest in a decade, while unemployment is at its lowest in a decade.

The Minister of Finance's approach is to stimulate growth with strategic investment in infrastructure and to reduce inequality, because we know that inclusive prosperity benefits everyone, the well off and not so well off alike.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but admire such amazing footwork.

I hope the Liberal Party's communications team fully appreciates just how much we believe the hon. member, whom we hold in high regard, is speaking in good faith. We sense in his voice that he wants to do politics differently. However, his voice is being used to justify the indefensible.

The Liberal Party's website states:

Business of Supply

After a decade of Stephen Harper, Canadians' faith in government has never been lower. The reason is simple: Canadians do not trust their government...

How can we trust you and your reassuring tone when, just today, as the finance minister's French villa just happens to be under fire, you come out with a new policy for cutting small business taxes? How can we be expected to trust you, honestly?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before the parliamentary secretary answers, I would like to remind hon. members that they have to speak in the third person. I am sure that, when the hon. member used the word "you", he was not referring to the Speaker.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

As I said many times yesterday in the House, from the get-go, even before he was appointed to his position, the minister worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The commissioner conducted an extensive review of his file and made recommendations that the minister followed. The minister is committed to following all of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's recommendations to ensure that he is fully complying with all laws and all of the commissioners' directives. I do not know what more I can say.

•(1105)

[English]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech, in which he clearly outlined the relevance of the track record of the Minister of Finance: the strongest growth in the G7, the highest employment rate since we took office, the lowest unemployment in a decade, and the introduction of the CCB. In fact, the IMF has projected Canada's growth rate to be half a point higher than it originally projected.

I am wondering if I could ask the hon. colleague a question. What are his constituents saying as they benefit from such a strong economy?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I come from a region where growth has been really intense. We have full employment in Quebec City. The problem that a lot of entrepreneurs face is a shortage of labour, which is a good spot to be in, in a way, but it needs to be addressed. I know we are working hard on that.

It benefits small businesses when the middle class has more air at the end of the month. The policy objectives that we have put forward are to try to reduce inequalities. We have seen rising inequalities here in Canada and around the western world, and I think these trends need to be reined in. That is the ambition of the minister, and the ambition of the government, to make sure every Canadian has an equal opportunity, an equal shot at success in life.

I cannot stress this enough. There is not a moment in this House that made me more proud than when I was sitting over there and saw the Minister of Finance rise to give his budget speech announcing the Canada child benefit. Back when I was growing up, it would have helped me, my mother, and my brother tremendously. It would have made a world of difference when we were growing up. I know it is making a world of difference for a lot of my constituents.

In food banks around my riding, I hear that they have observed a decrease in demand because, as the member knows, the Canada child benefit that we have put forward is the most progressive it has ever been. We stopped sending cheques to families of millionaires, the most privileged and wealthy Canadians, to give more to those who need it the most. That is how it should be.

This speaks a lot about the character of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, who have at heart that, as the tides rise and our economies grows, everyone benefits from it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is my first chance to speak on the supply day motion. Most Canadians would find it astonishing that the Minister of Finance's private arrangements were not put in a blind trust.

We assume these things, but when we look at our code of ethics—and this is what I want to ask the parliamentary secretary about—none of the obligations in this code of ethics appear to be enforceable, at all. Members of Parliament are free to ignore their obligations to operate to the highest standards, to not conduct themselves in ways that put them in conflict of interest.

I had a recent experience that confirms for me that the code of ethics and our plain understanding are simply unenforceable. Would the parliamentary secretary agree that we should take steps to ensure that the code of ethics of parliamentarians is actually enforceable and that the words mean something?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising that point today. It is something that I would definitely be happy to discuss with her. However, as far as the minister is concerned, he has worked with the Ethics Commissioner from the get-go and will continue to do so, to follow her recommendations and any directives she may have for him to be in full compliance with the code and with our laws. This has been the case from the beginning and will remain the case as we go forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Jonquière, which I think is an excellent idea.

[English]

It is with some interest, and I suppose with some regret almost, that I read the opposition day motion that came from the Conservatives today. The regret is only in the sense that we have to spend a day of Parliament asking for something that should be open and obvious to everybody, and that we have to go before Parliament, have a vote in Parliament, to ask one of the highest office holders in the land to be open and transparent with Canadians about a perceived and, I would argue, real potential conflict of interest within his portfolio.

Business of Supply

I would be surprised if, by the end of the day, the minister does not just walk into Parliament and place the documents in front of all Canadians. Clearly, that would solve a whole series of problems that we have with the current situation, which is highly unusual. I am not sure I have ever seen an opposition day motion like this. I am not sure I have ever seen a finance minister in this particular mess, which is a mess entirely of his own making and circumstance.

I go back to the Prime Minister's own proclamation, his dedication to Canadians, which said:

...transparent government is good government. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians.

It seems self-evident to me that, if the government is saying to trust it, then the government must also trust Canadians. What we would ask the Finance Minister to trust Canadians with is that, if he is acting ethically, if he is acting in a way that does not personally benefit and enrich him and his family, then he should be able to tell us.

Now, we have a couple of concerns with the way the Finance Minister has conducted himself, but I want to walk through this.

If we go back almost a full two years to October 28, 2015, to an interview with *The Globe and Mail* talking about the Finance Minister coming in, the article reads that under the conflict act the Finance Minister “would be expected to either sell off his assets or place them in a blind trust”.

The Finance Minister, prior to public life, in private life, ran a company called Morneau Shepell very successfully. He owned some \$43 million in shares, give or take, we think, but we do not know. He has been asked 14 or 15 times now if he is still in possession of those shares, if he still owns assets, and if he is involved in the company. However, each and every time, he has refused to answer.

Yesterday, at a press conference with the Prime Minister, there was this very uncomfortable moment when the press were asking the Finance Minister a direct question that only the Finance Minister could answer. As he moved forward to the microphone to answer, to be accountable to Canadians, as the Prime Minister demanded in his orders to cabinet, the Prime Minister said that he would be answering the questions. The Finance Minister had to take a step back and could be heard to say, “He's the boss”. The question that then relates to this is whether the Finance Minister has the confidence of the Prime Minister.

He has certainly lost a great deal of confidence with Canadians, particularly in the small business sector, and particularly with Canadians who watch and realize that the Finance Minister owns a private villa in France, had sheltered it under a private company to avoid paying taxes if he were then to pass it on to his children, while promoting legislation that would have prevented the same ability for farmers to pass their farm on to their kids. The contradiction of this is incredible. The Finance Minister actually used the tax code in such a way as to shelter his private villa in Provence from taxes, while promoting policies that would not allow a farmer to sell his or her farm to his or her kids.

We would think of that as out of touch, clearly, but then we start to step into the ethics of the question. We raised the concern earlier today. Late last night, I wrote to the Ethics Commissioner asking her

to launch a second investigation into the Finance Minister's dealings. This is highly regrettable, because the Finance Minister, as of two years ago in an interview, said:

I suspect all my assets will go into a blind trust.

I've already communicated with the Ethics Commissioner in that regard.

I, like most Canadians, believed him. Why? Well, it was because of course this is what he would have to do. The conflicts of interest, particularly for a finance minister, are obvious. If a finance minister owns assets, millions of dollars of shares in a company that deals with financial matters, the minister simply could not maintain his or her interests and would either have to sell the shares or put them in a blind trust where he or she could no longer affect them, as every finance minister I have ever heard of has done in the past.

● (1110)

What makes this finance minister special? Special would be one word for it. This is unprecedented. I have not seen a finance minister put himself in not only such a perception but actual conflict of interest with his duties.

Let us take one example. It is not just the budget, not just regulating banks, not just trying to guide the economy and the effect that could have on his private holdings, but a specific example is a bill the finance minister promoted in Parliament. He sponsored it. It is Bill C-27, which changes the way pensions work in Canada, leading to the option of targeted benefit plans, which is what they are called. It is a transition from one to another. New Brunswick put this through. Who was the lead consultant when New Brunswick went through changing its pension plan to one of these targeted benefit plans? It was Morneau Shepell. That is interesting. The finance minister, while he was head of Morneau Shepell, promoted targeted benefit plans, these specific types of insurance schemes. Because his company worked on that and made profit from it, he made money from it.

He then became finance minister, did not sell his shares in the company, kept his interests there, then promoted a piece of legislation that would help out that very same company that he is still involved with, from which he still benefits. It is jaw-dropping. If this is not the very definition of conflict of interest, I do not know what is. In future years, when Canadians studying politics look through the handbook of political terms, they will see “conflict of interest” and will see a picture of our finance minister there. I have never seen anything like this. There is no blind trust, no selling off the shares, but placing himself directly in the way of a conflict of interest accusation, so we have written to the finance minister.

Let me quote again. This was in a declaration made from the Prime Minister's Office two years ago:

Our plan for an open and accountable government will allow us to modernize how the Canadian government works, so that it better reflects the values and expectations of Canadians. At its heart is a simple idea: open government is good government. For Canadians to trust our government we must trust Canadians, and we will only be successful in implementing our agenda to the extent that we earn and keep this trust.

Business of Supply

Here is the good part. It is from the Prime Minister's Office, from his own lips.

To be worthy of Canadians' trust, we must always act with integrity. This is not merely a matter of adopting the right rules, or of ensuring technical compliance with those rules. As Ministers, you and your staff must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.

The last bit seems relevant to today, does it not? Has the finance minister sold his shares in Morneau Shepell? We have asked 14 times. He has refused to answer. Does he still have those shares? We do not know. Did he promote a bill that would in fact elevate the value of those shares? Yes, he did.

There is no particular joy taken in watching the credibility of government, the trust and faith that Canadians need to hold in their government, take another hit. Lord knows we have had enough of them, from the Senate scandals to personal scandals. I have not in my 14 years, as brief a time as that has been here in Parliament, seen anything close to this, where the appearance and obvious example of a conflict of interest has existed.

There is only one way to attempt to alleviate the cloud that sits over the finance minister right now, and that is if he comes forward with full disclosure, if he follows the documents he signed, the promises he made to Canadians when he came into cabinet, if he follows his own words, "I suspect all my assets will go into a blind trust" and that he had already communicated with the Ethics Commissioner in that regard, and if he follows the words of the Prime Minister: "If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians".

I do not know how the finance minister will get himself out of this mess. It will be incredibly difficult. I do not know how he does his job right now. Distractions at work prevent us sometimes from being good at what we need to do. Canadians need him to be good at what he does. Canadians need him to be focused on the task at hand. Canadians need him to be honest and consistent and have the highest ethical standards and integrity. I am not sure those things are true today.

• (1115)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to read from the Prime Minister's statement on open and accountable government. It says:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest.

Does the member think the minister has stood up to that standard set for him by his Prime Minister?

• (1120)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Here is the basic rule, Mr. Speaker, when people attain public office. They cannot make decisions that enrich themselves. They must recuse themselves. They must avoid not only I would argue, as the Prime Minister set the standard, the legal definition of conflict of interest where they vote on legislation or a budget or something where they know their vote will help benefit them personally. The Prime Minister said that is not enough, that people have to be beyond that, that they cannot even have the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The finance minister has moved legislation in the House that will benefit a company in which he is still involved. He insinuated two years ago that he would remove himself from that conflict of interest. He declared that he would either sell off everything or move it to a blind trust. Our colleague from Trinity—Spadina said publicly that there was no worry because he had moved everything into a blind trust. He deleted that tweet, but the funny thing about Twitter and all those other things is that a picture can be taken of a tweet and it still exists.

The Liberals were under the same allusion that many Canadians were under. I suspect many of my Liberal colleagues watching these things happen said that the minister would of course put it into a blind trust because everybody does, because that is the law, that is the ethical standard. It is in fact the standard the Prime Minister set and declared time after time in the House and to Canadians. I share those expectations with my Liberal colleagues. I thought the minister was not in a conflict of interest but I was wrong. The finance minister and now the Prime Minister have to be accountable for it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite disappointed in the official opposition, and once again the New Democratic Party is joining forces.

There is no surprise here. The Minister of Finance has done tremendous work and that work has been articulated by a couple of members already. On every occasion, opposition members have opposed everything this government has tried to do, whether it is giving middle-class Canadians tax breaks and putting an extra tax on Canada's wealthiest, or many of the other financial initiatives undertaken by this government.

Every member of the House has an obligation to go through the Ethics Commissioner, as does the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance is following the advice of Ethics Commissioner, Mary Dawson.

Would the member agree that members should follow the advice of Mary Dawson? All of us are obligated to go through the commissioner, including the Minister of Finance. Why does the member not believe that all members of Parliament have an obligation, first and foremost, to follow the advice and recommendations provided by the commissioner?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the obvious pattern with my colleague is that the correlation between the lack of voracity and intelligence in his argument is directly opposite to the volume which is used by my friend to express those opinions.

My friend shows outrage and feigned indignation when he knows that when the finance minister and other ministers swore themselves into cabinet, they said that they would not benefit from any of the decisions they would make.

Business of Supply

The finance minister insinuated to Canadians that he would remove himself from the conflict of interest by removing himself from direct benefit from Morneau Shepell. We all believed it. We only found out recently that the finance minister had a villa in France. It was only through investigative journalism that we found out he had a numbered company established so he could shelter that villa when he passed it on to his kids. Each and every step along the way he has not been forward and transparent as the Prime Minister swore on stack of bibles he and all his ministers would be. This is a question of trust and integrity.

My friend from Winnipeg North has a particular job to do, which is to be in here and fill time or whatever it is that he seeks to do. However, the fact remains that the confidence required for a government to perform its duties rests on its integrity and its actions, and the actions of the finance minister.

I am sure in a more quiet moment, my friend will realize that this does nothing for the trust Canadians require in their government and certainly does nothing for the confidence he hopes the Liberals will regain in two years time.

● (1125)

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his tireless efforts and the excellent work that he does on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, often on short notice. He advocates for the issues that he cares about both inside and outside the House.

Once again, we have before us some major ethical issues involving this government. Over the past two years, we have talked about a number of scandals in the House and even outside the House with the media. The Liberals have shown that their government is anything but transparent. During the 2015 election campaign, the Liberals announced that the wind of change was blowing, that things would be different, and that their government would be transparent. However, the reason we are debating this Conservative motion today is that something unethical has occurred and we are trying to shed some light on it.

We are discussing an issue that I wish we did not have to discuss, because that is not why I decided to stand for election in my wonderful constituency of Jonquière in 2014. We were elected to represent and to serve the interests of Canadians, not those in a particular privileged class. If it turns out that the Minister of Finance's family business stands to profit from the measures proposed in the document entitled *Tax Planning Using Private Corporations*, we must therefore conclude that we have before us a major problem of ethics and transparency.

How is it that this government, just like the previous government, is not capable of being transparent and ethical in its dealings with all Canadians? We often hear talk of a cynicism towards politicians and politics in general. In my election campaign, in 2015, I did not urge people to vote for me; rather, I simply urged them to vote, to have their say. In a number of countries, people are risking their lives when they go to vote, so it is regrettable that, here in a democracy, we have to urge people to go vote. As we see in Quebec at the

moment, as municipal elections are being held, there are advertisements urging people to vote.

Why then are there members of the House of Commons who do nothing but increase public cynicism and the sense of dishonesty and a lack of transparency?

I want to go back to the reason I entered politics, because it really was not for my own personal enrichment. I enjoy saying that I am a former mail carrier. I delivered mail all week for 15 years. I was very happy doing what I was doing, because I was providing people with a service. When I decided to stand for office, it was so that I could keep providing a service. As members of Parliament, that is something we often forget. We talk a lot about figures and about changes, but we forget all the little miracles that each member of this House can do every day.

At times, desperate people come to see us, as was the case this summer. For more than two months, a man had been having trouble obtaining his employment insurance benefits. It was the first time this had happened to him, and he did not know where else to turn. He came to our office in Jonquière. We welcomed him and provided him with some services and explanations. We even looked for additional help for him through the wonderful community organizations in Jonquière. That is our ultimate goal as MPs. That is what all of us in the House should be doing. We are not here to accumulate wealth, but to serve all Canadians.

Since I was speaking about my election and my commitments, I want to add that I had a meeting at the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner as soon as I arrived in Ottawa. I was given a document to fill out, which contained explanations. I do not come from a wealthy family. My family's riches consist of my parent's love and all the family values they taught me. That is what I am going to pass on to my children, and I believe that they are our greatest riches.

I am also pleased to say that I have owned my own wonderful little home for 12 years now. It is my pride and joy. At first, I thought it was a bit strange when the commissioner asked me to list my few assets on paper.

● (1130)

However, it did not take me long to realize that I was in the big leagues now. The members of the House of Commons come from all different backgrounds. Some are wealthy, while others are less fortunate. Some own multiple properties or companies. That was when I realized the importance of declaring our assets and being ethically transparent. Even though I did not own much property, I understood that disclosing what I did own was important, for me, for all our constituents, and for all Canadians. It is not difficult for members to fill out forms and be transparent from the outset if they have nothing to hide.

Business of Supply

That brings me to the current government. As we have seen, this is not the first time this government has sought to benefit companies like the Minister of Finance's family business, Morneau Shepell. As my colleague said earlier, Bill C-27 could benefit these companies and benefit the Minister of Finance directly.

Certain experts have also pointed out that the Minister of Finance's tax reform could have economic benefits for Morneau Shepell, as I said, because it will force doctors and other small business owners to purchase private pension plans. The tax reform and all the suspected conflicts of interest involving the finance minister since he was elected are another good example of the fact that the Liberal government is working more for its own interests and those of its friends. It is working only for itself.

The Liberals keep repeating that the middle class is important, but I have to wonder whether they even know what exactly the middle class is. Is middle class determined by one's bank account or one's fortune? I see the real middle class every day, and I consider the people around me to be part of it. I help a lot of people around me. We talk about it and we live it every day. As MPs, it is important that we stay connected to our reality. We do not get that impression from the current government. No one should ever remain an MP if they are going to put their own interests first.

I will wrap up because I am running out of time. I had a lot more to say. We talked about tax reform and we talked about helping our SMEs. We see that the government has done nothing to tackle tax havens head-on. A lot has been said lately about investments in the Bahamas. Why is the Liberal government reluctant to tackle tax havens head-on? It is going after the little fish, but not the big fish. Is it too complicated, too difficult? It is easier to go after ordinary workers, those who belong to the middle class.

When I ran for office it was to represent my constituents of the riding of Jonquière, to give them a voice and to help my community grow. It never occurred to me to run to further my own interests or as a way to get rich. I believe that should be the case for everyone here in the House. I firmly believe that it is possible to do politics in an ethical and transparent manner. I find it extremely unfortunate that the Minister of Finance broke his word when he said that he was going to put his interests in a blind trust when in the end he did nothing of the sort. Worse yet, he introduced a bill to make himself richer. This kind of conduct is disappointing.

Again, I cannot believe that we are being forced to waste our time on settling ethics issues in the House, when we were elected to serve the public and not to serve the interests of the privileged few.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the member has indicated that she has, as have all of us, met with the Ethics Commissioner. She also indicated that, after having that communication with the Ethics Commissioner's office, she ultimately abided by what had been recommended to her. That is what I understood her to imply through the translation.

The Minister of Finance has done the very same thing. In those discussions, Mary Dawson, our Ethics Commissioner, compels, requires, or requests that the Minister of Finance put things into a blind trust, he has indicated that he will do just that.

The member has stated the government is not going after tax evaders. We know that is not true. This government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to recuperate taxes from individuals, so that everyone pays a fairer share. We see that with respect to the tax breaks to Canada's middle class, something the NDP and the Conservatives voted against. They voted against the special tax on Canada's wealthiest. They voted against the Canada child benefit program. Whenever they have the opportunity to oppose the Minister of Finance, they oppose him. Although they are in opposition, there is a responsibility for them to be creative and constructive in their criticisms. To that end, I would ask the member this. Would she not agree that the Minister of Finance, like all of us, is obligated to follow the recommendations and advice of the Ethics Commissioner?

● (1135)

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I am going to address two of my colleague's points. First, as I mentioned, we wonder why the minister did not do what he was supposed to from the beginning. It is not complicated. You have to complete a questionnaire. Did he just forget because he has too many villas and too many assets? In that case, there is an obvious problem. When someone is caught red-handed, their excuse is that they forgot.

It was very easy to properly fill out the form at the beginning and to follow the questionnaire. It was clear. You do not have to wait. I added information about my credit card limit, which I had to increase because of my parliamentary expenses. I filled out my form over the phone. It was something I had to do. I did it right away. It is not a big deal, and I did it. It is our responsibility as members.

Second, I can throw back to my colleague the point about opposing something just to oppose it. Why did the government reject outright the bill sponsored by my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, here in the House, which proposed a system for transferring family businesses that would have helped our SMEs and our family farms? That was an NDP proposal, one of many.

Business of Supply

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Jonquière on her very valid remarks. I think she made it clear that all parliamentarians have obligations. To be absolutely sure the air is clear and everything is out in the open, we are required to disclose everything we have, and government members such as parliamentary secretaries and ministers are no exception to that rule. I know the member is quite aware of the tax evasion happening in tax havens. I would invite her to comment on the information brought to light here three weeks ago by the member for Carleton when he tabled documents revealing, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the Minister of Finance's company, Morneau Shepell, owned a company in Barbados that served as a tax shelter.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whose work I admire very much and whose valuable contributions to these discussions I appreciate. We have the evidence, the facts, right here in the House. The question is why. Individuals who become MPs or even the Minister of Finance know that changes will be made to the tax system. The Minister of Finance has the power to give to and the power to take away from Canadians and must therefore adhere to a strict code of ethics. When information about assets in the Bahamas is brought to light here in the House, I need to know more. This is about tax evasion. Why is the government not digging deeper? Could it be to protect those very assets?

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this debate today. It will give the government an opportunity to rebuild its image and credibility in public finance. We are simply asking the government to have the Minister of Finance release the documents related to his personal possessions that may have a direct impact on the management of his department, the Department of Finance.

I will not be alone in saying this, since I will shortly be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

From the outset, I would like to say how much I respect and admire the Minister of Finance as a person. I respect him because, when a man of this calibre becomes involved in politics, the entire political class wins. I am pleased to reiterate that we must have very high standards, especially the Minister of Finance, because his department is key to the Canadian economy.

However, when the Minister of Finance is the owner of a \$1-billion publicly traded family business that is directly impacted by each of the decisions made by the Minister of Finance, of course he has to be purer than the driven snow.

Unfortunately, over the past few weeks, the opposite has been happening. I do not remember, but there must have been a former finance minister whose authority has been so scratched and bruised, even by the Prime Minister. I will come back to that later.

Three weeks ago, in this very House, the member for Carleton tabled a document showing that the Minister of Finance's company, Morneau Shepell, has a subsidiary located in Barbados, a known tax haven for investors. That, in itself, is a major problem, which is why we would like the Minister of Finance to shed some light on this.

To make matters worse, it would seem that the Minister of Finance has forgotten, for two years, to disclose the fact that his company

owned another company that in turn owned a villa in Provence. Everybody owns property, and I perfectly understand that someone with pots of money may own lots of properties all over the place. However, to have forgotten about owning a villa in Provence is a little suspicious, to say the least.

I should say, though, that perhaps it was at his villa in Provence that the Minister of Finance learned to speak such excellent French. I am not being sarcastic. I sincerely commend the minister on his proficiency in French.

In addition, we learned from CBC that it was only because it hounded the Minister of Finance that he finally admitted that he had forgotten to mention his villa. We also learned from *The Globe and Mail*, and this goes to the heart of today's debate, that although the Minister of Finance is an owner and shareholder of a company worth tens of millions of dollars, his properties and assets have not been put in a blind trust.

This is unfortunate, because it would have set the record straight and, more importantly, allowed the minister to act with his hands untied. It is not a failure to succeed in business, nor is it a failure to make a father's inheritance grow, as the minister did. Above all, it is not a failure to want to get involved in politics after having succeeded in business, quite the contrary. Still, there are ethical rules that we must follow at all times—exceed, even.

That is what we are asking of the Minister of Finance today through our motion. In fact, we are asking that he table all the documents so that we know the truth about this.

As I mentioned, three factors are tarnishing the moral authority of the Minister of Finance: the matter of his business in Barbados, a tax shelter and haven; the fact that he forgot to disclose that he owns a villa in Provence; and finally, the fact that he did not put his assets into a blind trust, which would have been the simplest and most effective solution.

That is nothing compared to the direct attack that the Minister of Finance launched against small business owners in recent months. Let us remember that, on July 18, in the middle of the summer, when it was nice and warm and half of Canada was on vacation, he started a consultation, barely 75 days long, to review the small business tax rate.

● (1140)

When a consultation of that kind is launched in the middle of summer, it is either because the government's mind is made up, or because it has no desire to hear from Canadians. Fortunately, Canadians from across the country rose up to tell the Liberals that they were making no sense. Fortunately, here in the House of Commons, the official opposition has been asking the government every conceivable question, and some that are inconceivable, in order to tell it that it is making no sense.

Business of Supply

Let us remember that more than 110 of the 120 questions that the official opposition was able to ask in the first week were on this issue. We have taken the matter seriously because the direct attack made no sense. The Liberals wanted to raise taxes for small businesses that want to sell to the next generation. That is complete nonsense. The current government wanted to raise taxes for entrepreneurs who are putting money aside. In the private sector, business owners put money aside to use in the bad years, to pay bonuses, to invest in equipment, and even to use as a pension fund. The government wanted to collect more taxes from them, and I am not even talking about income splitting.

We are talking three senseless direct attacks against our entrepreneurs. The minister did not have much time to answer questions yesterday because the Prime Minister did not want him to, but he did announce something that he seemed to think was the best thing since sliced bread. He was very proud to confirm that the government would be lowering taxes on entrepreneurs, on small businesses, to 9%. How wonderful.

Hang on. Does anyone here remember the Liberals making that promise and breaking it? Now they are following through. Why did they break that promise? In the 2015 budget, our government made a law stating that the tax rate, which was 11% at the time, would have to drop to 9%. What was the first thing the current government did in its 2016 budget with respect to small businesses? It scrapped that obligation to lower the rate to 9%, even though it promised to do so. That is terrible. The government made a promise, broke it, and then brought it back to the table as though it were reinventing the wheel. Canadians are not fools. They knew it made no sense.

Need I remind members of the sad fact that, when the government launched its full frontal attack on small businesses, the Prime Minister's two personal companies were miraculously unaffected by the changes the Liberal government wanted to impose? It is unbelievable. In addition, the Minister of Finance made it so that small businesses would have to pay more tax, while conveniently avoiding any impact to his family business. This is totally unacceptable and is what creates cynicism in politics.

Need I also remind members that the current government was elected on a promise of running small deficits, deficits that are now 80% higher than what was promised. We were also promised a return to balance by 2019, but now, we do not even know when the government will balance the books, which is totally unacceptable. This spendthrift government has completely lost control of the public purse and has no idea how to manage it properly, and it needs to be called out.

In closing, it is important that the Minister of Finance have the necessary authority to carry out his duties, as he is the architect of Canada's economic base and is the most important minister. I do not want to take anything away from anyone, but he is the most important minister in cabinet. That is why, under the leadership of the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, the then finance minister Jim Flaherty worked hand in hand with the Prime Minister. The same was true of the Honourable Joe Oliver.

The current Prime Minister publicly scorns his own Minister of Finance. As far as I can remember, I have never seen a Prime Minister so arrogant, smug and scornful of his Minister of Finance.

Yesterday, in the middle of a question period with journalists in Ontario, the Prime Minister said the following:

● (1145)

[English]

Ask the question to the Prime Minister, you have the chance to have the Prime Minister in front of you, ask the question to the Prime Minister.

I have never heard that. Where is God?

[Translation]

It is absolutely incredible. At the risk of wading into partisan politics a bit here, even during the worst years of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and his finance minister Paul Martin, two people who hated each other, never would Jean Chrétien have scorned his finance minister in that way. We are talking about the authority of the finance minister. We are in Canada. Canada is a strong and proud country that has to be led by a strong Prime Minister and a strong finance minister. When the Prime Minister undercuts the finance minister's authority, he undercuts the authority of Canada as a whole.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before moving on to questions and comments, I would remind the hon. member that traditionally in the House we try to have integrity and show respect for all members. When we are talking about other members, the Prime Minister, the leader of the opposition, we have to be sure not to use offensive language. If everyone can show that level of respect for themselves, then I think that will go a long way to improving the debate.

● (1150)

[English]

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, many Canadians voted for a new way of doing things. We have to remember that. Although this motion comes from the official opposition, the Conservative Party, the last four years of its administration were not exactly unmarred by ethical issues. There were many examples of Conservative senators who did not seem to know where they lived and claimed per diems in this city when they lived here, and to whom \$90,000 was paid by operatives in the Prime Minister's Office, and there were attempts to suppress reports.

Business of Supply

When I campaigned during the last election, I heard a very clear message from Canadians that they wanted a strong recommitment to ethics in their government. The Liberal finance minister said that he would put his considerable assets in a blind trust, and two years later we find out that he did not. He forgot to list a numbered company that owns his villa in France, even though he is obligated to report all of his assets, including numbered companies. We found out he has assets parked offshore in noted tax havens like Barbados. Finally, we found out that he has been sitting at the cabinet table making decisions every single day for the last two years when he knows what his assets are and is making decisions on issues that would affect the value of those assets. At the same time, I have heard Liberals ask what the problem is. They do not seem to understand that there are clear conflicts of interest. Frankly, there are real conflicts of interest, not just apparent conflicts of interest, and serious ethical breaches.

What is my hon. colleague's comment on the Liberals saying today that there is really nothing to see here, that Canadians should not be concerned about the Liberal finance minister, but we should, instead, be talking about other issues like the economy?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, my colleague made some comments about the last four years the Conservatives were in office. Yes, people judged us. That is why Quebec NDP members in the House of Commons went from 50-plus members to 16 and the Conservatives went from five to 12. That was the result in the last election and it will be interesting two years from now to see how the NDP do in Quebec.

I see my Liberal colleagues laughing. Just be quiet, I will get back to you guys.

The finance minister is a very important person in cabinet and an even more important person in Canada. We need a strong finance minister. I respect the fact that the involvement of this millionaire finance minister in politics is a plus for everyone. When someone of his level joins the political fight, it is great for all of us, but there needs to be a clear mandate and we need a clear view of everything to be sure that every decision made by his government will not benefit his own business. Morneau Shepell is one of the greatest Canadian businesses, but day after day it has to deal with the finance minister's decisions. This is why the finance minister should have no link at all with that business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will remind hon. members that they are speaking through the Speaker and not to the Speaker, so when someone says, "You do this", or, "You just wait", it was not aimed at me. I do not want to take offence at that.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize the importance of what the Ethics Commissioner actually said and ask my knowledgeable colleague a question, because I am sure he is aware of these types of situations.

Let us go back to the Harper budget or even that government's legislative means in dealing with the Canadian Wheat Board. Their measures had fairly profound impacts on the Canadian Wheat Board. No doubt there were many Conservative farmers who would have

been directly impacted. When we pass a budget, there are huge impacts. Maybe the member could clarify for Canadians why parliamentarians have to participate and why we have the Ethics Commissioner in the first place.

• (1155)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, based on what the member said, we are all in a conflict of interest. Why? It is because we pay taxes and vote on budgets that include tax measures. Based on that, we are all in a conflict of interest. This is why we have to be very clear and declare exactly what our assets are. Yes, some farmers are making profits for sure, but we are not talking about \$1 billion, like Morneau Shepell. We are talking about family ownership and a few hundred dollars a year compared to a \$1 billion. That is why this is a special case and why we need clarity and clarification. The first one who would benefit from that is the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a true honour to be in the House today to speak on this very important issue. I thank my colleague who just spoke for his tenacity in standing up for Canadians. It is a real honour to be part of the Conservative Party of Canada with its legacy of standing up for Canadian taxpayers.

Over the years, when Canadians have seen fit to elect a party with an entitlement mentality like the Liberal party, eventually it creates a huge mess. We see Canada heading in that direction again. We are ready and committed to clean up any Liberal mess left over.

I am particularly honoured to be able to share what I heard from my youth advisory board. I notified youth in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove that I would like to hold a monthly youth advisory board meeting with them to discuss issues that were important to them. We have held two meetings. The first was on the marijuana issue. These are youth in grade 12 up to and in university, some working on undergraduate degrees. They are very mature, wise, bright, and engaging young people, and it was interesting to get their perspective. It is a non-partisan youth advisory board, with people with all kinds of opinions. The consensus within the group on marijuana was that the government was moving way too fast, that it needed to provide education, to listen to police boards across the country, and to slow the process down. Many of them are okay with the legalization process for marijuana, but not the way the Liberal government is doing it. It is moving way too fast. It seems to have this artificial date of July 1 of next year that legalization must be in place by Canada Day, so that everyone can start smoking then. The group is very concerned about the government's approach to marijuana.

Business of Supply

I asked them what topic they would like to talk about next, and they said the new tax the government is wanting to put on Canadian small business. I found that fascinating. We met last Saturday morning and had another really good meeting that lasted for about an hour or an hour and a half. Some of the youth went into the meeting thinking that maybe the government was right and that some Canadians are not paying their fair share of taxes. To prepare for the meeting, the materials they received were general materials that all Canadians have access to. Much of it was non-partisan, and some partisan.

Overwhelmingly, those who went into the meeting thinking that maybe the government was right changed their position 180 degrees and came out of the meeting saying that the government was wrong. Calling hard-working Canadians tax cheats is shameful, and they were really shocked at the government taking that approach. They also said that the government needed to slow the process down. The number one thing that every Liberal member of Parliament heard regarding their so-called consultations was to keep the consultations going. The Liberal Party held the consultations during the summertime, starting in the middle of July and continuing in August and September and ending at the beginning of October. In those two and a half months, people were on holidays, and the consultations were often held in the middle of the week at three o'clock in the afternoon when Canadians were at work. Those who were not on holidays were working, yet the Liberals still held these so-called consultations.

The Liberals heard over and over again that they should keep the consultations going so they could continue to hear from people because they were not happy. The answer from the Liberal members was that the people were confused, that Canadians are confused and business is confused, so they would end the consultations to avoid the confusion. They would provide legislation so there would be no more confusion.

The youth advisory board also said that this process needed to continue and that there needed to be additional consultations. I am very proud and happy to be able to pass on what I heard from them this last Saturday morning. It is a very wise group of young people.

• (1200)

Today, we are debating a motion by Her Majesty's official opposition. I have listened to the debate and the comments made so far, and I think back to Jim Flaherty, who was a finance minister in the Stephen Harper government. He was appointed and very quickly earned the reputation of being the greatest finance minister in the world.

What an honour it was to be part of that government. He did deserve that title. He was an extremely bright, ethical, funny man. He had a great sense of humour. People liked to be around Jim. There was great sorrow at his untimely death. He was known as the greatest finance minister Canada probably has ever had. At the time, he was greatest in the world.

Just yesterday when I was watching the news I heard the questions by the media as the government was trying to calm down people. There was a news conference where the government was saying that it is really looking out for what is good for Canadians, that it wants

tax fairness and is launching its new programs around fairness and taxes.

Canadians do not believe this. The media does not believe it. There is this cloud hanging over the finance minister. As has been pointed out, the office of the finance minister is extremely important. The finance minister is probably the most powerful posting in government in Canada. That finance minister has to be squeaky clean.

I really do not want to attack that individual, because I do not know his intent. However, it is the responsibility of the government to make sure that everything is squeaky clean. That is what this Prime Minister promised, that he was going to be squeaky clean and all his ministers were going to be squeaky clean. Throughout the last two years, the first half of a one-term mandate, they were going to do things that were squeaky clean and transparent.

There is great suspicion that things are not squeaky clean. I am hearing a lot of angst among Canadians that the government is not keeping its promises time and time again. The small business tax was supposed to be reduced. That was in the platform of the previous Conservative government, and it would have happened immediately. Now we are two years into this government's mandate, and look at what has happened to that. The government is in trouble now. Canadians are very upset with what is happening.

The government has now announced that it will reduce the small business tax back down to the 9%. Well, actually, it will go down to 10%, and then just before the election it will be lowered to 9%. That is not what Canadians want. They have not been told the truth throughout the whole process.

This motion is about wanting information. What did the finance minister declare to the Ethics Commissioner from the time of his appointment to July of this year when the consultation period started? That would indicate whether there was any intended self-benefit, or whether there is a conflict of interest. What is the motive of the Prime Minister and the finance minister?

I have heard Canadians say that these two people have really not lived like hard-working Canadians. They live off a trust. They have multi-million dollar assets. They are not like you and me, Mr. Speaker. They are not like normal Canadians. They are very wealthy people. To whom much is given, much is required.

Accountability is a critical promise by the Prime Minister. We need accountability from him, and we have not had it. We need accountability from the finance minister, and to this point we have not had it.

It will be interesting as we go to a vote on this motion, probably later today, to see if the members of the Liberal Party keep the promises that were made in the Speech from the Throne at the start of this Parliament that they would be a transparent, accountable government. We are not seeing that from the leadership within the cabinet. Will the Liberal members demand that their Prime Minister and finance minister be transparent and provide the House with the details necessary for transparency?

Business of Supply

• (1205)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great confidence in my friend and hon. member across the way, and in fact, all of them on the other side, because their job is to take a situation and for the benefit of Canadians, paint the blackest, bleakest possible picture. However, I have even more confidence in the non-partisan commissioner whose job it is to review this and truly assess it from a non-partisan perspective.

If the Ethics Commissioner reviews this and finds that everything is good and above board, will that be good enough for the Conservative Party and for him?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells for his kind compliment, and I return that. I think highly of him. He has worked hard. I have heard good reports about his constituency office work and his helping his constituents, so I congratulate him on that.

Our concern is with the leadership of the Liberal Party and this entitlement mentality and the lack of transparency. The Ethics Commissioner can only make decisions based on the information provided. I think that is the issue today. Has the finance minister provided all the details of his assets?

We cannot always believe the media, but we have heard reports that there are unreported assets. If that is the case, the Ethics Commissioner would not be able to make a true ruling. That is why we have this motion today that asks the finance minister, in full transparency, what he reported to the Ethics Commissioner. If he did not report all these assets, why not, and is he fit to be the finance minister of this country?

I think it is very important, and it is fair. It needs to be transparent.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, *The Globe and Mail* places the value of the finance minister's shares in Morneau Shepell at around \$43 million. We know it is possible that with the proposed tax changes, HR management and pension consulting companies like Morneau Shepell could benefit from increased sales of individual pension plans as business owners shift their retirement savings from private corporations. We also know that Morneau Shepell has subsidiaries in Barbados and the Bahamas, where corporate tax rates are as low as 2.5%. We know that Morneau Shepell and the Morneau family trust are sheltered from the proposed tax changes, as is the Prime Minister's family fortune.

When we add this all up and think about the small-business people at home who have now become a target of these proposed tax changes, do they have confidence that the government will do them justice when it looks at tax fairness as a whole? I wonder if they feel that CEOs and tax havens and the wealthiest Canadians are going to be under the same scrutiny, when we hear that the finance minister himself has these connections, potentially.

Given all that, does the member feel that the business people in his community have that confidence in the finance minister?

• (1210)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the business community in my community or across Canada has confidence in the Liberal government, its proposals, and the drastic tax changes that have been done or are being proposed without proper consultation.

I was also shocked when the finance minister was asked in the House about his involvement and if there would be any direct benefit from this and whether he thought he would be in conflict. The finance minister said, "Not only did I not abstain, but I actively engaged in" the discussions. For the finance minister to be bragging of his engagement on this, when the optics are that he could be in conflict, is shocking.

Small businesses, and Canadians in general, are very concerned about the entitlement attitude of the government.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise here today to defend an individual of incredible integrity. We have heard a lot of attempts in this place to attack the integrity of the finance minister, but as we have heard, he has worked with the integrity commissioner, and to any questions, he has been more than forthcoming. Therefore, I am happy to rise here today to talk about the accomplishments of this minister and what he is doing, along with our government, to build a stronger middle class.

Building a stronger middle class does not come without changes. The issue of tax planning and using private corporations is one of those changes that is required to finally bring equity to our tax system, something the finance minister has been behind from the start. We have been working, from the moment we took office, to implement these changes that benefit the middle class and those working hard to join it. These changes that are forthcoming are just another step in setting things right for the middle class, again something the finance minister talked about as a candidate and has now as the Minister of Finance.

We took our first steps when Parliament resumed in December 2015, lowering taxes on the middle class, as promised, and raising them on the wealthiest 1%. Unfortunately, both the Conservatives and the New Democrats voted against that. This middle-class tax cut has been benefiting nine million Canadians, and we are extremely proud of that.

We brought in the new Canada child benefit, which has lifted thousands of children out of poverty, including 16,000 in my riding of St. Catharines. This is a significant accomplishment, and one of the architects of it was, of course, the finance minister. As a result of the Canada child benefit, nine out of 10 families are getting more in benefits than they did under the previous government. With the CCB, we have ensured that child benefits are more generous and are actually targeted to those who need them most.

Business of Supply

Our government, under the leadership of the finance minister and working with the provinces, expanded the Canada pension plan to ensure that Canadians have financial security after a lifetime of hard work. The strengthened CPP will provide more money to Canadians when they retire, allowing them to focus more on what matters most: time with family.

As members can see, our actions and the actions of the finance minister could not be clearer. The guiding principle of fairness is essential, and indeed, is the defining piece of our plan to strengthen the middle class. It is abundantly clear that when we have an economy that works for the middle class, we have a country that works for everyone.

It is fitting that we are having this debate during Small Business Week, so let us talk about small businesses. We know that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They are a key driver of Canada's economy. I think everyone in this chamber would agree with that. Small businesses account for 98% of all businesses and more than 70% of all private sector jobs. In recognition of how critical small businesses are to Canada's growth, our government, and again, the Minister of Finance, are taking action to help small businesses grow, invest, and create good, well-paying jobs.

Yesterday the finance minister announced, along with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Small Business and Tourism, the government's intention to lower the small-business tax rate to 10% in 2018 and then to 9% in 2019. As a result, the combined federal-provincial-territorial average tax rate for small businesses will be lowered to 12.9% from 14.4%, ensuring that Canadians by far will continue to have the lowest small-business taxes in the G7 and the fourth-lowest among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. This lower rate will mean that small-business owners can retain more of their earnings to reinvest, to support the growth of their businesses, and for job creation.

The finance minister also announced the government's intention to move forward on proposals to fix a tax system that is inherently unfair to the middle class. We have heard a lot of criticism about the finance minister, but he is one of the leading voices in this country on this side of the House to fight for a system that benefits the middle class and against those policies that are unfair to the middle class.

We have a tax system currently that encourages wealthy individuals to incorporate just so they can get a tax advantage. This cannot continue. It leads to a solution where someone making hundreds of thousands of dollars can get a lower tax rate than a middle-class worker making much less. A person making \$300,000 per year can save as much tax as an average Canadian can earn in a year. This is not acceptable, and our government and the finance minister are going to fix it.

• (1215)

In July, the finance minister launched consultations to hear from Canadians on how to fix things and how to then make—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I see the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands rising on a point of order.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There are a number of us here who are very enthused about this

subject and about hearing the government's perspective on the motion we have before us. However, the member is about seven minutes into his speech and has not yet touched on the motion. I would ask if you could encourage him to speak to the motion and to the tabling of documents that have to do with the minister's ethical lapses and his failure to abide by the ethical conditions that have been laid out for him by the Ethics Commissioner and others, including the Prime Minister. If he could speak to that, we would be glad to hear his opinion.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I recognize that the hon. member for St. Catharines, in his initial comments, made reference to the activities of the finance minister in a general sense. Considering that the subject of the motion today pertains to the performance of the finance minister in the course of his duties, I so far have not heard anything that is impertinent and not relevant to the discussion. Certainly, in the course of his time, the member for St. Catharines will bring the dialogue back in reference specifically to the motion. I am sure he will do that in the minutes ahead.

The hon. member for St. Catharines.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, hearing the attempt by the official opposition to criticize the finance minister, I am standing here to speak of the great work he is doing. The finance minister has worked with various commissioners, and there is no wrongdoing. I mentioned this to a colleague earlier, from the old commercial from the 1980s: where is the beef? This is a fishing expedition and an attempt to undermine the credibility of the finance minister.

As I was stating, yesterday our government announced the intention to simplify the proposal to limit the ability of owners of private corporations to lower their personal income taxes by sprinkling their income to family members. We want to be very clear on this next point that the vast majority of private corporations will not be impacted by these sprinkling measures. Only an estimated 50,000 family-owned private businesses are sprinkling income. This represents only around 3% of privately controlled corporations. Again, we have a finance minister who is looking at what is best for the middle class. These are policies the previous government did not go after, policies that generally disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Canadians

In addition, our government announced that it will not be moving forward with proposed measures to limit access to the lifetime capital gains exemption.

As we continue to make progress, we will also continue to listen carefully to the submissions that have been received on these matters.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to assure my hon. colleagues of the finance minister's, and the government's, plan to grow and strengthen the middle class.

Business of Supply

Job creation has been robust since we came to power, with 400,000 jobs created. Over the last 12 months, nearly 90% of the jobs created have been full-time positions. In the second quarter of this year, the economy grew by an impressively strong 4.5%. Over the last four quarters, our economy has had the fastest growth since early 2006. The Canadian economy is the fastest-growing economy in the G7 by a wide margin. A lot of that is thanks to the hard work of the finance minister. That is news Canadians can be happy about. It is great news.

The finance minister continues to work hard to create a healthy and growing economy in which businesses can generate good-paying jobs and where the middle class and those working hard to join it can have confidence that they will succeed.

• (1220)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the finance minister, and described him as if his actions could not be clearer and more fair. He also talked about the middle-class tax break. However, when I think about the middle-class break, 17.9 million did not get a benefit from the middle-class tax break, which is two-thirds of working Canadians. Anyone who works full time and earns \$23 an hour or less got nothing.

The Liberals talk about how they want to help those who are not in the middle class to join the middle class, but when we talk about actions that could not be clearer, let us talk about how clear it is. They are forgetting about those who want to join the middle class every step of the way. They turn their attention to small business when they talk about tax fairness instead of CEO stock-option loopholes, and instead of tax havens. We want tax fairness. We want to see actions that could be clearer so that we actually see the clear picture.

How can the Liberals defend or understand the middle class when the finance minister himself is so rich that he cannot even remember he has a holding company in France and others elsewhere in the world?

We want a fair system. We want a finance minister who actually backs up his commitment to helping those join the middle class and the real middle class here in Canada. I would like to hear the member comment about those proposals that he is so proud of.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the nine million Canadians who did benefit from the middle-class tax cut. However, the one thing he did not point out is the Canada child benefit, which lifted 300,000 children out of poverty. This is working for the middle class and those working hard to join it. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against that proposal.

This is a finance minister who cares about individuals, and cares about making an economy that works for everyone. The proof is in the pudding. We have delivered on those commitments. We are seeing the impacts, and we are seeing the growth in our economy, because the money is going to individuals who are going to spend it back in the economy. We are seeing that, and we are seeing the growth.

The current Governor of the Bank of Canada, who was appointed by the previous prime minister, agrees. This plan is working, and the finance minister's policies are helping out.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech contained many things that would be certainly worthy of debate and discussion. However, I want to focus on the motion itself, and I would ask for the member's comments, as there are Canadians questioning the disposition of the finance minister's assets and want to know whether or not he still owns shares in Morneau Shepell, which is a company that offers retirement and pension management advice to businesses that are affected by the very tax proposal that was announced on July 18.

• (1225)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, the finance minister has complied with everything that has been requested. Assets have been disclosed. There is no issue. There is no report from any commissioner. The finance minister did his job, followed the rules, and continues to work with whichever commissioner has any questions for him. He worked very closely and disclosed everything.

At the end of the day, if opposition members were as concerned about child poverty in this country as they were about going on a fishing expedition, I think we would have a better place to live. I am glad the finance minister is concerned about issues like that and growing the middle class.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear my colleague mention the integrity of the finance minister.

I have heard many comments from members opposite about the circumstances of the finance minister's birth, but very little comment about the circumstances of the life of service that he has led. The finance minister I know has served his community, for example, on the board of Covenant House, which is the largest homeless shelter in the country. He served on the board and as the chair of St. Michael's Hospital, which serves the largest homeless population in the country.

The Saskatchewan finance minister, Kevin Doherty, said about our finance minister in his discussion around his negotiations over CPP policy issues that:

He did a masterful job in listening to the different positions and understanding why there were concerns...The thing with Bill is that when he tells you something, you can take it to the bank...There's no hidden agenda. There's no telling you one thing and telling somebody else something else to try to get a deal.

This is the essence of integrity—

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the parliamentary secretary, even when another hon. member's name appears in a quote we have to avoid that and use another reference in that case. I will just add that for member's benefit for next time.

The hon. member for St. Catharines, a short response, please.

Business of Supply

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. Here is an individual who works tirelessly, even before the campaign to help with the party's platform, despite his birth and his circumstances, to grow the middle class, and to cut child poverty. This is a person who should be celebrated, and whose integrity is without question.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the stakeholders in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, who have provided and are providing feedback on the proposed consultation paper, “Tax Planning Using Private Corporations”.

I have met with many small and large businesses in my riding, as well as tax experts from leading accounting firms to understand that tax fairness is something our government must pursue and that we do need to consult and listen to our stakeholders to get it right.

The city of Vaughan is home to over 13,000 businesses, and an entrepreneurial spirit I find is unrivalled in the country.

[Translation]

Our government continues to work for the middle class. We are helping the middle class.

[English]

We know when the middle class succeeds, we all succeed.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to talk about how the government is creating the conditions for all Canadians to succeed in a changing and exciting economy.

When we came into office two years ago, we made a commitment to invest in our people, in our communities, and in our economy. We made a commitment to help grow the middle class and those working hard to join it. Our plan is working. We are now the fastest growing economy in the G7, not by a small margin but a wide margin. In the second quarter, the annualized growth rate hit 4.5%. Over the last four quarters our economy has grown the fastest since 2006. In two years, we have created—

The Deputy Speaker: Order please. The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member across the way the motion reads:

That, given accusations by experts that the Minister of Finance's family business, Morneau Shepell, stands to benefit from the proposed changes outlined in “Tax Planning Using Private Corporations” and assurances by the Minister that he has abided by his Public Declaration of Agreed Compliance Measures with respect to his family business, the House request that the Minister table all documents he submitted to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner between November 4, 2015, and July 18, 2017.

That is the motion before the House right now. I would hope the member across the way would recognize that is the topic of discussion today, not seemingly going down the topic the member is talking about. I just wanted to correct him on that. He might want to stick to the subject at hand.

• (1230)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies for his comments. Members will know of course that speech in the House does need to pertain to the

motion and the subject that is before the House. That is a general rule. Members will also know that members are given quite a degree of latitude in terms of how they make their arguments in this respect.

I will listen carefully to the hon. member to make sure he remains on track. I will also say that in the course of a subject that invokes the activities, integrity as some may say, of the minister in this case, that is in question, speech and arguments around either side of those questions would certainly be within the boundaries of relevance, from my point of view.

We will listen carefully to that, certainly, but again members have a fairly wide berth in how they make their arguments in this regard.

We will now go back to the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your explanation. I thank my hon. colleague across the aisle for his intervention as well.

I have known the member of Parliament for Toronto Centre, the Minister of Finance, for a few years now. When I think about the integrity and hard work that goes into our careers as politicians and as members of a community, I look to, and I am glad to say that I am friends with and on the same team as, the Minister of Finance. I know his integrity. I know the core values that he represents. I am glad to be on a team with the hon. minister.

Going back to my comments today with regard to tax planning using private corporations, we as government and myself as an individual, always co-operate with all government bodies, including any meetings with the Ethics Commissioner and so forth. I would like to throw that back.

Our economy is growing well. Our government has created 112,000 full-time jobs and this is because of the policies that we have put in place.

Wage growth in this country is actually coming back. In September we saw an acceleration in wage growth and this is great for Canadian workers and great for Canadian families. It is also great for the people I represent. This too is related to policies that we have put in place and consultations that we have had and are having with regards to tax fairness.

Our government laid the foundation for economic growth the moment we took office. The first thing we did was to cut taxes for nine million middle-class Canadians, providing over \$20 billion of tax relief to Canadians. We also raised taxes on the wealthiest 1%, which was the right thing to do. Single individuals who benefit from this are saving an average of \$330 per year and couples who benefit are saving an average of \$540 each year.

Business of Supply

Our government has also made child benefits more accessible to Canadians, a simpler program, a tax-free program, providing on average \$2,300 extra per year, per family. That is remarkable and again relates to the actions and the policies put in place by our finance minister. I am proud to be a part of that. I am proud to be a part of a team that cares for children who currently live in poverty, a team that cares for families who currently need a bit of assistance. That is what our party is about, again speaking to the integrity of the finance minister.

The member of Parliament for Toronto Centre came together with his colleagues at the provincial level and came to an agreement to enhance the Canada pension plan. Think about that. Think about the previous government. For 10 years it did nothing with respect to CPP. The finance minister worked in collaboration with the provinces and Canadians will get an enhanced Canada pension plan that will benefit millions of them going forward.

Yesterday, we announced the lowering of the small business tax rate. It has gone from 11% in 2015 to 10% in 2018 and will be 9% in 2019. This, part and parcel, involved listening to Canadians and small business owners, many of whom I represent.

I have had a lot of feedback in the last few weeks. I can say to my constituents and small and large businesses back home that they have a voice here in Ottawa, that this government understands their concerns. Each of us as members of Parliament have brought their constituents' concerns back to Ottawa. That is what we are obligated to do. That is our job.

This government is listening.

I am proud to say that we have cut taxes for small businesses and they will benefit up to \$7,500. This will provide tax relief over a couple of years of approximately \$3 billion. This action should be applauded by all sides of the House.

The Prime Minister made his intention clear yesterday during an announcement in Markham, and I certainly support it.

To support this change the government will take steps to ensure that Canadian-controlled private corporation status is not used to reduce personal income tax obligations for high-income earners rather than supporting small businesses. We have a tax system that encourages wealthy individuals to incorporate just so they can get a tax advantage. This leads to a situation where someone making hundreds of thousands of dollars can get a lower tax rate than a middle-class worker making much less per year. That is not fair, and our government is going to fix it.

On July 18, the Minister of Finance launched a consultation process, otherwise known as tax planning using private corporations. We have heard lots of feedback.

• (1235)

I know I have spent numerous hours going over the proposal, looking at it. We need tax fairness and we need to get it right. We are consulting and listening to all Canadians. I spent many hours understanding this paper and ensuring there were no unintended consequences, that it was a proposed consultation paper. We absolutely are going to get it right.

We heard from business owners, professionals, experts, and our caucus on ways to improve our proposals to ensure we would not affect hard-working middle-class entrepreneurs, many who live in the city of Vaughan and many who I represent as the member of Parliament for Vaughan—Woodbridge, such as family businesses, farmers, and fishers. As someone who grew up on the north coast of British Columbia, I have many friends who are fishers. They still go out on their trawlers, seiners, gillnetters to try to make a living. I know how important it is that we protect and ensure they have a good livelihood. We have heard them and we are acting on what we have heard.

In the short term, the government intends to simplify the proposal to limit the ability of owners of private corporations to lower their personal income taxes by sprinkling their income to family members. The vast majority of private corporations will not be impacted by the proposed income sprinkling measures. An estimated 50,000 family owned private businesses are sprinkling income. This represents a small fraction, 3% of Canadian controlled private corporations. All we are doing is extending the rules that are already in place on income pertaining to dividends, which is the right thing to do. That is tax fairness, and I know Canadians agree with us.

Over the coming weeks and months, we will announce the next steps in our plan to address tax planning using private corporations that take into account feedback received from Canadians during this consultation period.

In all cases, our changes will support small businesses and their contributions to our economy and, most important, our communities. I know first hand, having worked in the private sector for over 20 years in finance, that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. We will do everything we can to help them grow. This is seen in the numbers, in the formation rates of small businesses, in business earnings. Businesses and consumers are buoyant because we have a program in place that is working.

In this day and age, where there is so much misinformation, it is crucial that we set the record straight and stick to the facts. This is what I am doing here today. From the very beginning, we have been perfectly clear about our commitment to ensure that as our economy grows, the benefits go to the middle class and, yes, those working hard to join it, not just to those who are already successful.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a good friend. We serve together on the finance committee. At the end of his speech, he alludes to the facts. The facts are that all of us as parliamentarians have to disclose what we have as assets. The facts are that there are rules around ministerial accountability on this issue. The facts are that the minister, unlike others in the House, has decided not to disclose what he did for two years and he has been found out. Those are the facts.

I would ask the member, who I believe has personal integrity at his heart, to account for the fact that the finance minister has not abided by the ministerial rules and his mandate letter, which said he would be beyond reproach as far as any perception of such things.

Business of Supply

• (1240)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to call the member for the beautiful riding of Brantford—Brant my friend and a colleague in the House. We did serve on the finance committee. We serve our residents as well.

When we call into question someone's integrity, we know that individually we all have personal responsibility, and I believe in that. I believe in integrity and in hard work. Those are my core values. I know for a fact that those are the same core values of the finance minister. I know for a fact that since the first day in office, the Minister of Finance has worked with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure her every recommendation and all conflict of interest rules are followed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. However, I am afraid that my question might prove challenging because I get the impression that both sides of the House are talking about two completely different things today. The fact remains that I am concerned about the Minister of Finance's two years of silence.

On a much smaller scale, I own a little cottage in Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc. Although our work schedule does not allow me to get out there as often as I would like, I did not forget that I had a cottage in Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc. Even if I go there only once a year, I am the owner of that cottage. Even if I never went there, my municipal and school tax bills remind me twice a year that I am the owner of that beautiful place.

How can the Minister of Finance forget for two years, which potentially represents a couple of trips and a couple of tax cycles, that he owns a villa in France? Why did he not just disclose it?

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Minister of Finance, the member for Toronto Centre, we have full confidence in the Ethics Commissioner and her recommendations. Obviously, every member of Parliament is willing to take any further steps to avoid conflicts, or any perception of conflicts, as deemed appropriate by the Ethics Commissioner.

Again, I go back to integrity and what it means. It means fighting for kids who are living in poverty, helping those who need skills training, and putting innovation into the economy and growing it so all middle-class Canadians benefit. That is how we strengthen the economy for today and for the future.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to raise, because the debate today gives us an opportunity to do so, is that our Ethics Commissioner's advice and her saying that everything is being done according to Hoyle is absolutely useless in a common sense understanding of what we should do to maintain ethical standards. Our code of ethics, which is found in our standing rules book that is probably in every member's desk, is good to read. It calls on us to have high moral and ethical standards, and not to confuse our personal business dealings with our public work as an MP. None of it is enforceable.

I call on the Liberal government to make our code of ethics enforceable, which previous governments have not done.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that any suggestions the hon. member has about strengthening any rules should be brought forward to the pertinent individuals to whom that pertains. I would hope the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands does so.

My personal view is that we continue to work hard for all Canadians. We continue to hold to the values of integrity and hard work, ensuring that day in and day out we do what is right for our constituents, whether we represent a riding on the east coast, west coast, or in the middle.

• (1245)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

As the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and on behalf of the hard-working people of the upper Ottawa Valley, I participate in today's debate regarding the lack of transparency in the government.

I congratulate my eastern Ontario colleague, the hon. member for Carleton, for the excellent job he is doing as shadow finance minister for our Conservative government in waiting. The hon. member for Carleton is responsible for today's motion that the House is now debating.

Today's debate is a familiar refrain in Ottawa since the last election. There is a lack of transparency or, as some would call it, a hidden agenda between what the government says and what it does, and who benefits. Is this example before Canadians today simply one politician gaming the system to his benefit, or are Canadians looking at systematic corrupt behaviour on a scale of the multi-billion dollar Ontario electricity scandal?

Is the non-disclosure of all his vast corporate wealth by the member for Toronto Centre hiding the need for impartiality in decision-making that would be necessary had full disclosure taken place?

The allegation has been made that the changes put forth by the member for Toronto Centre, apart from unfairly attacking small businesses or individuals who are incorporated, will enrich the personal wealth of the finance minister. The need for higher taxes in these changes being pushed through the House, without proper public consultation, have been brought about by the decision to run huge budget deficits.

When I am asked the question about why the government is in such a huge deficit, I respond very bluntly that it is bad spending. The question then becomes, what kind of bad spending is resulting in such high deficits? I use the example of bad spending by the federal government on what the finance minister, the member for Toronto Centre, spent on a slick cover for his deficit budget booklet. The cover is used one day. Duplicate this example of bad spending across government and one can start to understand why the finances of Canada are in such a mess.

Business of Supply

In 2017, just a slick cover on the deficit budget cost taxpayers \$212,000. That makes the \$175,000 the Liberal member for Toronto Centre spent on a slick cover for his budget in 2016 seem like a bargain.

Now to the member for Toronto Centre, who has a private European villa, and, to quote a national magazine, a “tax-dodging shell company...set up..to manage it”, something he neglected to disclose to the Ethics Commissioner, \$212,000 must seem like chump change. “What is all the fuss?” the finance minister asks.

Simply put, the fuss is that the finance minister promised Canadians that he would abstain from decisions and discussions that relate to Morneau Shepell. Instead, he has actively bragged that not only did he abstain but he actively engaged in the discussions and promotion of the policy that experts say benefits his family-owned company. Beyond that, the member for Toronto Centre failed to disclose a private corporation to the Ethics Commissioner. Most Canadians would never forget, if they owned a villa in France. To top it all off, the member for Toronto Centre admitted he did not place more than \$30 million in Morneau Shepell shares into a blind trust.

Few Canadians had the benefit of a trust fund from daddy growing up, or attended private schools or had a fat income waiting in a family business when they were done school. The family business in this case is showing other one percenters how to avoid their fair share of tax.

In 2016, the median income for females in my riding was just over \$25,000 per year. In fact, the bulk of all wage earners in my riding earn between \$20,000 and \$29,000 per year. Just the price of the slick cover on the 2017 deficit budget document would have paid the incomes of eight average working females in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Those same individuals fall below the low income cutoff that normally qualifies a person for the supplement.

• (1250)

How ironic it is that one of the pieces of advice the member for Toronto Centre dispensed to his wealthy clients was how to game the system to collect the guaranteed income supplement. The guaranteed income supplement is intended for seniors who have no other source of income, except the universal old age pension. The supplement is means-tested. It is not intended for one percenters who hide their money to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

To put into further perspective the amount spent by the member for Toronto Centre on a cover for a booklet, I would point out that the Conservative government and Prime Minister Stephen Harper spent \$600 for a stock photo for the cover of the 2015 balanced budget that was presented to Canadians. Yes, \$600, and the federal budget was balanced. There is no respect for today's tax dollars in Ottawa.

The small business tax changes that have been presented by the member for Toronto Centre are a doubled-edged sword. On the one hand, the Liberal tax changes will unfairly tax doctors, farmers, small businesses, and a host of other hard-working Canadians, while on the other hand not touch the personal fortunes of the member for Toronto Centre and the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister benefited as a trust fund kid, as did his father before him.

To be clear, the motion before us today requests that the member for Toronto Centre table all documents he submitted to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner between November 4, 2015, and July 18, 2017. Canadians have a right to know if the decisions being made by the member for Toronto Centre will be of personal benefit to his family fortune and the fortunes of other Liberal Party members.

The test will be if Liberal Party members vote in favour of today's motion. If the member for Toronto Centre has nothing to hide, the vote should be unanimous in favour of full disclosure. If, on the other hand, Liberal members speak against this motion or, worse, do not support it, Canadians can rightly ask what the member for Toronto Centre is hiding. By not providing full disclosure to Canadians, every financial decision made by the minister must be called into question. In its attack on small businesses, doctors, and others, the government asks who benefits. It is big business, of course, the big business types that attend pay-to-play fundraisers hosted in places like downtown Toronto. Big business and big government are mere images of one another. Big business, like the current government, overwhelmingly leans left.

Economists refer to the practice of giving handouts to big business as welfare capitalism, which is how much big business gets rich and most of it stays rich. Liberal-favoured big fundraisers make their fortunes exclusively through direct government subsidies and mandates. In Ontario, industrial wind turbines are the result of successful lobbying by the type of big business conglomerates favoured by the Liberal Party. Without government intervention, industrial wind turbines would represent a trivial part of the economy and not be a multi-million dollar drain on the pockets of electricity customers, who are forced into energy poverty by that bad spending. Unnecessary government intervention causes bad spending, starting with the government blowing over \$200,000 on a cover of a budget and ending up with billions spent on social experiments that only hurt ordinary working Canadians.

Canadians have already been exposed to the five principles of the Liberal Party's tax policy. First, it attacks small business. Just ask the families who run campgrounds how effective that attack has been. Second, it continues to raise taxes on small business while publicly stating the opposite. Third, it continues to burden job creators with unnecessary regulations and red tape to stifle creativity. Fourth, it continues to bring in tax changes that make it harder and harder for the family farm to survive and continue within the family in the next generation. Fifth, it ensures that the tax system will continue to favour big business at the expense of entrepreneurs, particularly female entrepreneurs, whose success in small business is breaking the glass ceiling.

Business of Supply

It has taken too long for Canadians to see just how out of touch the Liberal Party is with the needs and aspirations of ordinary Canadians. The member for Toronto Centre needs to get out of his Toronto glass bubble and actually listen to people, not to the one percenters he likes to associate with. The time has come for the government to listen to Canadians who respect the law, work hard, and play by the rules.

• (1255)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opened her speech by citing her responses to constituents. I wonder what the member opposite would say to her constituents who are benefiting from a strong economy, strong employment, the lowest unemployment we have had in a decade, and the Canada child benefit, which are all initiatives introduced by our current finance minister.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the people in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke have not been able to benefit from any growing economy because their wealth has been overshadowed. In fact, their wealth is mostly non-existent because of the huge taxes and the cost of living in the Ottawa Valley. Add to that the cost of electricity that is driving out jobs and, quite frankly, driving people out of their homes.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before the member spoke, a government member talked about facts. The member talked about the middle-class tax break helping the middle class, but forgot to mention the fact that 17.9 million Canadians are not eligible for the middle-class tax break, namely, the working Canadians who earn \$45,000 a year or less, who get nothing from it. The Liberals talked about the fact they are revising the small business tax, but have forgotten to revise the CEO tax loopholes on tax havens. The Liberals talked about the Minister of Finance going to the Privacy Commissioner about his disclosures, but they forgot to mention that the minister also forgot to mention his cottage, which is an incorporated company, and forgot to mention his promise to put his investments in a blind trust.

It is one thing for the government members to talk about the details and important facts of what they are doing for the middle class and the small business community, but quite another for the finance minister not to talk about what he should disclose to the Canadian public. Maybe the member can talk about that difference.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, when the finance minister forgot about his failure to put \$30 million worth Morneau Shepell shares into a blind trust, he was also knowledgeable of and benefiting directly from his decision to tax the retained earnings of businesses. That is the money that business owners set away so they can expand, or that farmers save for a rainy day or a bad season. More to the point, Morneau Shepell is the company that stands to gain the most from the individual pension plans peddled to business owners to protect their retirement incomes, who think that instead of setting money aside for a rainy day, all this money will come raining down on them through this other way of saving for retirement.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, shortly after the finance minister announced the business tax changes that would impact a broad range of Canadians, including doctors, there was a widely publicized Morneau Shepell poster placed in the Saskatoon community hospital. I do not know whether the member

saw it, but clearly its purpose was to talk to doctors who would potentially be significantly impacted by these tax changes. That would be a direct benefit to Morneau Shepell. Could the member comment on that?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, one thing we have noticed in the hospitals is that there are whiteboards put into the emergency reception area, and the whiteboards say how long it will take before a patient can see a doctor. If these proposed tax changes go ahead, hundreds of doctors, including the entire staff of the emergency room in Thunder Bay, have said they will leave Ontario. As a result, even if an emergency department still exists, it will be many hours before a person in dire need will actually be seen by a doctor.

• (1300)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of today's motion that calls upon the finance minister to table all documents he submitted to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner between November 4, 2015, and July 18, 2017. July 18 was the day of the now infamous discussion paper, which came complete with draft legislation that would completely transform the taxation of Canadian-controlled private corporations if fully enacted by, among other things, severely discouraging small business owners from investing in their companies to support themselves in retirement.

The reaction to these tax proposals was immediate. They were universally panned by tax preparation professionals. In fact, I am not aware of a single professional private sector accountant who supports them.

Today's motion is about conflict of interest and the appearance of conflict of interest. As thousands of professionals, entrepreneurs, shop owners, construction contractors, fishers, and farmers nervously contacted their lawyers and accountants to find out how they would be affected by these changes, some of them, including those who would perhaps face an increase in taxes of up to 71%, were told that it might be in their best interest to start an individual private pension. They were shocked and appalled to learn that this is a specialized financial service and that the leading supplier of this product is none other than the finance minister's family business, Morneau Shepell.

The appearance of a conflict of interest in this matter has drawn people's attention to the finance minister's private business affairs more generally. Canadians, including members of the Liberal caucus, had assumed that the finance minister's shares in Morneau Shepell had either been sold or placed in a blind trust. His family business is a pension management and advice company, and the minister is in a position to influence consumer behaviour via its products.

Business of Supply

The Liberals ran on an idealistic platform that included many promises. Many Canadians believed these promises to be sincere and elected the Liberals. As we know, they promised only a modest budget deficit of \$10 billion to pay for infrastructure and to then return to a balance. We now have a structural deficit that far exceeds this so-called modest maximum, without any plan to return to a balanced budget. They claimed they would reduce taxes on middle-class Canadians, but then stripped away all the credits that most middle-class families use, leaving the average Canadian family paying over \$800 in additional income tax under the current government. That was before they contemplated the draconian small business tax changes, and before their most recent disaster, the announcement about taxing the discounts of retail employees. They made a few other promises, like changing the voting system within 18 months, which was perhaps an unwise promise. Nevertheless, it was completely abandoned.

However, for purposes of today's motion, the promise that we need to talk about is their promise to be the most open and transparent government in the history of Canada. One of the first things the government did was to publish the mandate letters of the Prime Minister to each member of his cabinet. It is worth looking at these mandate letters.

In the mandate letter to the finance minister, the Prime Minister stated:

...Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen. I expect that our work will be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from Canadians.

The letter continues:

It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect—they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

Indeed, they do. In fact, they expect the government to put the public interest ahead of the personal interests of members of cabinet.

The letter goes on to state:

This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with Opposition Members...Parliamentary Committees and the public service; constructive dialogue with Canadians, civil society, and stakeholders, including business...identifying ways to find solutions and avoid escalating conflicts unnecessarily. As well, members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, indeed all journalists in Canada and abroad, are professionals who, by asking necessary questions, contribute in an important way to the democratic process. Your professionalism and engagement with them are essential.

● (1305)

At yesterday's bizarre press conference in Stouffville, we can hardly blame the Minister of Finance. The journalists who were there, who were just beginning to understand the potential depth of the finance minister's compliance issues, wanted to question him. The Prime Minister more or less held the podium, and at first tried to prevent the finance minister from answering. He said that they had a chance to ask the Prime Minister a question, rather than let his finance minister answer.

The mandate letter concludes by saying:

As Minister, you must ensure that you are aware of and fully compliant with the Conflict of Interest Act and Treasury Board policies and guidelines. You will be provided with a copy of Open and Accountable Government to assist you as you undertake your responsibilities. I ask that you carefully read it and ensure that your staff does...as well. I draw your attention in particular to the Ethical Guidelines set

out in Annex A of that document...As noted in the Guidelines, you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the [letter of the] law.

The statement on “Open and Accountable Government”, which the Prime Minister referred to, said something that has been repeated many times in this House but is important. It states, “Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest.”

Now we know a few things. We know that the Liberal government has broken a litany of election promises such as electoral reform, deficit targets, reducing the tax burden on middle-class Canadians, and access to information reform. We know that the government has repeatedly made a mockery of the Prime Minister's statement on open and accountable government on everything from cash for access fundraising to the Prime Minister's visit to billionaire island, as well as attempts to appoint Liberal loyalists as key office holders to Parliament and failure to find replacements for officers with expiring terms, including the Ethics Commissioner.

We know that the government has proposed a draconian tax hike on small businesses, which everybody knows is nothing more than a tax grab induced by an insatiable appetite for tax revenue to plug an out-of-control deficit of the government's own making. We know that the reaction to this so-called tax reform is expert recommendation to some people to obtain retirement and investment services like those provided by Morneau Shepell. We know that the minister has failed to comply with the Conflict of Interest Act by failing to disclose an interest in a private French corporation apparently used to manage his French villa. We know that the minister's substantial family fortune is not held in a blind trust, as one would expect. We do not know whether he still holds the \$30-plus million in shares that he owned in 2015.

Given the foregoing, one must conclude that either the Minister of Finance is so completely out of touch with the reality of small business that he has allowed these tax proposals to go ahead and come out on July 15 without any forethought to the consequences, or the Minister of Finance actually thinks that small business owners really are under-taxed at best or a bunch of cheaters at worst. Canadians are considering a third possibility, and that is that he decided to put the interests of his family's business ahead of the interests of Canadian citizens.

I do not want to have to believe the latter. I do not want Canadians to be in the position that they even have to consider the possibility of the latter. With our motion, the Minister of Finance is being invited to clear at least some of the air and end speculation around what is obviously, at a minimum, the appearance of conflict of interest.

Business of Supply

Will the Minister of Finance, who has already demonstrated a failure to accurately disclose his affairs by failing to disclose the French corporation that owns his villa, set the record straight and table all documents submitted to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner? That way, he can let Canadians judge whether he stood to gain from his proposed changes outlined in the paper entitled “Tax Planning Using Private Corporations”.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed in terms of the degree to which the Conservative opposition party has really tried to personalize this issue.

We all know that every member of Parliament has an obligation to go to the Ethics Commissioner. The Ethics Commissioner provides each and every one of us, through her office, the opportunity to be transparent in terms of what it is that we need to declare. The Minister of Finance has clearly indicated that he will follow the recommendations and advice of the Ethics Commissioner. Thus, we have the Ethics Commissioner who is apolitical versus the Conservative opposition members who have taken every moment they have ever had in the last two years to be critical of the Minister of Finance. They voted against the tax break to Canada's middle class. They voted against a tax on Canada's wealthiest. They have been speaking out loud and clear against tax fairness among many other initiatives by the Minister of Finance.

I ask the member why would Canadians, or anyone, want to follow the advice and recommendations from the Conservative Party when we actually have an independent office designed to assist members of all political parties in terms of what it is that they need to do? The Minister of Finance has committed to following the advice of the commissioner.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I have to address a few things that the member said. To begin with, we are not personalizing this issue. There are journalists, citizens, and people questioning whether the finance minister has put his family and business interests ahead of that of the Canadian public. I do not want that to be true. I do not want to live in the type of country where this type of behaviour happens.

I want the finance minister to answer the questions that people are putting to him. I am not certain how many times he has been asked this morning, either 14 or 15 times, whether he still has shares in Morneau Shepell. He could answer the question, table the documents, and put the issue to bed.

The answer that the member is giving the House is the technical answer, “It seems like he is probably following the law”. However, his obligations are not merely discharged by following the law. That is the minimum, and he is to be held to a higher standard according to both his mandate letter and the statement on open and accountable government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his very eloquent speech.

I have to acknowledge that I approve of the wording of this opposition motion. However, I would have preferred to have devoted one hour rather than a whole day to this common occurrence, as important as it may be. That is too bad. It is obvious that the Minister of Finance should have complied with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's requests. It is an unacceptable omission on the part of the person holding that office.

This is also an opportunity for me to reveal that the government stooped so low as to promise to reduce the small business tax rate from 10.5% to 10% and then to 9%, and then waited until there was a crisis to make good on its promise. The SMEs in our ridings have been waiting a long time for this election promise to be kept.

Does my colleague not find it appalling that our SMEs are getting a consolation prize?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his kind words. Yes, the small business owners in my riding, and in different parts of the country that I have travelled to over the last several weeks, have expressed their outrage. I share and fully understand why they are upset. What compounds the level of anger felt by entrepreneurs and business owners, as the government is characterizing them as under-taxed at best, and cheaters at worst, is when they then see that the finance minister is in the business of pension products that many small business owners are being now encouraged to buy. We need to put this to bed. We need to get rid of any appearance of conflict of interest so that the finance minister will have some credibility to execute his office.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

It is a pleasure for me to speak to the House about the government's plan to help the middle class and all those working hard to join it. We were elected by promising Canadians real change in what we do and how we do it. Canadians sent a clear message in the last election, and the constituents of Ottawa—Vanier gave me a clear mandate and a clear message last April.

They expect us to keep the promises we make to them. Our actions to date demonstrate that that is exactly what we are doing. We promised to make investments in order to stimulate economic growth, strengthen the middle class, and help those working hard to join it. We promised to provide more direct assistance to people in need by scaling back assistance to those less in need.

Let us look at what we have accomplished so far. From the beginning, one of the government's top priorities has been to level the playing field so that all Canadians would have the opportunity to succeed. That is why our government's first action was to raise taxes for the wealthiest 1% and cut taxes for the middle class. We also introduced the Canada child benefit. Compared to the previous child benefit system, the new benefit is more generous and better targeted to those who need it.

Business of Supply

We enhanced the Canada pension plan to give Canadians a more dignified retirement after working their entire lives and making such vital contributions to society. We also made historic investments in infrastructure and invested in a major training and skills acquisition plan. It is increasingly clear that our plan to ensure economic growth is working. We have the fastest growing economy in the G7, by far.

In the second quarter of this year, our economy grew by an impressive 4.5%. In the past four quarters, our economy has enjoyed the fastest growth since 2006. Our economy is currently growing at an impressive rate of 4.5%, which is, I repeat, the highest rate since 2006.

Some 400,000 jobs have been created since we took office. These are significant results that are having a direct impact on the quality of life of Canadians, the middle class, and those working hard to join it. Through major public investments, we will continue to invest in Canadians themselves, their talents, their commitment, and their determination.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member is giving a speech on the situation of the economy, and some points that one might contest. However, the motion we are debating actually says:

That, given accusations by experts that the Minister of Finance's family business, Morneau Shepell, stands to benefit from the proposed changes outlined in "Tax Planning Using Private Corporations" and assurances by the Minister that he has abided by his Public Declaration of Agreed Compliance Measures with respect to his family business, the House request that the Minister table all documents he submitted to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner between November 4, 2015, and July 18, 2017.

This is the motion we are debating. Therefore, I think the rules of the House prescribe that the member address that motion and its particulars in terms of the unethical conduct of the Finance Minister.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his comment. It is true that all members must consider the relevance of their comments to the subject at hand. Today, the motion before the House requires members to always consider the mandate of the Minister of Finance.

The hon. member for Vanier has spoken for three and a half minutes and, to this point, I have heard no reference to the Minister of Finance. I expect that, in the next few minutes, the hon. member will be speaking to the matter before the House.

I remind hon. members that they must make sure that they speak to the matter before the House. At the same time, they have a lot of freedom as to their arguments.

I will be listening to the speeches given in today's debate to ensure that this is the case.

The hon. member for Vanier has the floor.

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to continue my remarks. As I mentioned earlier, a number of initiatives have been put in place since we were elected, since our

government came to power. There is still a lot of work to do and we are in the process of getting it done. To that end, yesterday, the Prime Minister, accompanied by the Minister of Finance, announced the government's intention to lower the small business tax rate to 10% in 2018 and to 9% in 2019, while moving forward on proposals to fix a tax system that is inherently unfair to the middle class. We want to ensure that the 9% tax rate for small businesses and the low tax rate for other corporations will be used for investments, growth, and job creation in the business community.

Our tax system encourages wealthy individuals to incorporate just so they can get a tax advantage. As a result, someone making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year can get a lower tax rate than a middle-class worker making much less.

In July, the Minister of Finance launched consultations to hear what Canadians had to say about what adjustments could be made so the tax system works for the middle class. We heard the opinions of business owners, professionals, experts and members of our caucus on how to improve our proposals so that they do not affect hard-working, middle-class entrepreneurs like family businesses, farmers and fishers. We listened to their comments and we are following up on what we heard. The minister is following up on what he heard. That is his role as finance minister.

In the short run, the government intends to streamline the proposal that would limit the ability of private corporation owners to pay less personal income tax by sprinkling their income to family members. Over the next few weeks and months, the government will unveil the next stages in its plan, which the Minister of Finance is mandated to promote, to address tax planning using private corporations. The measures we take will reflect the feedback that we have reviewed to date, and we will continue to carefully review the remaining feedback.

The government will continue to support small businesses and their contribution to our communities and economy. We will keep a low tax rate for small businesses and support their owners so that they can actively invest in the growth of their businesses, create jobs, boost entrepreneurship, and stimulate the growth of our economy.

We recognize the importance of maintaining family farms, and we will work with Canadians to ensure that the upcoming measures do not keep family businesses from being passed on to the next generation.

We will perform a gender-based analysis on the final proposals to make sure any changes made to the tax regime promote equality between men and women.

Business of Supply

I want to reassure all Canadians and all members that every measure we take will support women's ongoing success. The Minister of Finance will do his utmost to make sure that Canadians can have confidence in these measures.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about initiatives that the government had put forward, especially the middle-class tax cut. Two-thirds of working people, nine million Canadians, were not eligible to benefit from the middle-class tax break, anyone who earns \$23 an hour or less and works full time. I know many people in the member's riding have been excluded from the middle-class tax break.

The Liberals have turned their attention to and put a square focus on small business in their tax fairness policy, as they call it. However, they forgot to talk about CEO tax loopholes and tax havens in their tax fairness policy.

I have huge concerns when the government talks about tax fairness, the middle class and those they want to help join it, when they are not included in the tax fairness policies.

The finance minister forgets to declare his company that might have a cottage in France, and a Prime Minister who will not be affected by these changes to the small business tax. We know they do not understand when we talk about middle class Canadians and tax fairness.

Maybe the member could tell us who is in the Liberal middle class. We would like to know.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and speech.

I want to reiterate the importance of the new measure that was announced yesterday. As mentioned earlier, we announced that we have lowered the small business tax rate from 10% to 9%. I see this as an opportunity to strengthen Canada's small and medium-sized businesses. This is a measure that will truly support small businesses and their owners and help us keep growing our economy.

I think we need to really look at the measures being implemented and those to come.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech on the motion we have put forward today.

Her speech reflected exactly the same attitude we have seen from the Liberal government since the beginning. The government is trying to divert attention. It is trying to talk about other things, because it knows that it acted poorly. It knows that it did not listen to Canadians, small businesses, and farmers. It knows that decisions were made in Toronto. It knows that one of the government's economic advisers thinks family farms do not exist and that they are just parcels of land to help farms and farmers pay less tax.

My colleague's speech sums up very well the way the government is addressing the very important issue in our motion, the credibility of the Minister of Finance.

My question is very simple: can my colleague, who has just made a speech on all sorts of topics other than today's motion, tell us whether she thinks, yes or no, the Minister of Finance should submit all his documents to the House so that it can assess his competence and credibility?

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments.

As members know, the Minister of Finance took this summer's consultations very seriously. The good news is that I personally had the opportunity to speak with a number of my constituents who had serious concerns. With their help, I was able to submit some suggestions to the finance minister, and he took them into account. We can see the results of that today with the new measure brought in to help small and medium-sized businesses, including the ones in my riding.

In Ottawa—Vanier, 66% of residents earn less than \$50,000 a year. The new measure announced yesterday will encourage small and medium-sized businesses to invest in the region. That is just one example of the suggestions the Minister of Finance took into account in order to move forward with new measures to strengthen our economy.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us essentially casts aspersions on the character of our finance minister. It talks about accusations. It talks about the minister standing to benefit. It is a simple motion.

Before I get in to the motion, I have a confession to make. I have been involved in tax avoidance.

An. hon. member: No.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Yes, I have done it for multiple years.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: I don't know if I want to know about that.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Mr. Speaker, I have been buying RRSPs. I am deferring my taxes as well, but I am avoiding taxes and I am doing it legally. I plan to continue to do it.

My point is that tax planning is legitimate. The government puts in a number of rules to encourage us to plan in certain ways. RRSPs are designed to help people save for their retirement. It is a tax planning measure that allows people to avoid taxes, encouraging them to put aside money for when they retire.

There is a difference between that and tax evasion. Tax evasion is doing something illegal to not pay taxes. There are no rules. People are evading taxes.

Business of Supply

Our government has not criticized any of our citizens for tax evasion. There is nothing wrong with tax planning. What happens at times is that certain structures that are designed to encourage certain behaviour also encourage other behaviours that the government may or may not want. When that happens, the situation is looked at and addressed. That is what the government has been doing in this case. It has been looking at whether certain rules are being used in certain ways that were unforeseen. This happens all the time. It happens when any law is introduced. It is the law of unintended consequences. That is what our finance minister is trying to deal with today.

The motion purports that the finance minister is looking to help a company with which he used to be involved. That is not the case at all. The case is looking at a tax planning strategy that is used in the ways we want it to be used, but also in ways we do not want it to be used.

The key point is that anybody involved in tax avoidance through proper planning is not a tax cheat, is not doing anything illegal, is using the rules to his or her benefit. There is nothing wrong with that. There is something wrong when people are involved in tax evasion, but we are not seeing that tax evasion. This has happened but why does it happen? Because tax rules are complex.

Taxing involves putting something in place and expect a certain outcome, but at times other things happen. The rules are looked at after a while and we see certain behaviours we want to encourage, but we also see a few other behaviours we do not want to encourage. When that happens, we look to make certain changes.

The finance minister is working on exactly that. He is not looking to attack anybody. He is not looking to denigrate any part of our society. He is not looking to attack farmers or physicians. He is not looking to attack anybody.

• (1335)

He is simply looking at tax strategies that are working in ways that we do not want to encourage in certain key instances. That is all of it.

This government's commitment is to the middle class and, it should be underlined, those working hard to join it, absolutely. Most of our 1.8 million Canadian-controlled private corporations are very small businesses and they are the middle class. Our government is committed to not do anything to hurt those businesses, and we are working diligently in that direction. This paper does not talk about any of those issues. It does not bring up one measure that has been proposed by the finance minister with which it is in disagreement. This brings up character assassination.

It is the job of the opposition to critique the laws that are being proposed. It is the job of the opposition to say that something proposed in the government's tax changes is not correct. However, we are not seeing that. We are not seeing the opposition doing its job. We are seeing the opposition members engaging in character assassination instead of saying they see a problem with the way farms are being targeted. Fair enough; let us hear it, but we do not have it here—

• (1340)

Mr. Luc Berthold: We do. We did say that.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Yes, it wasn't important enough to trump character assassination. Members could say they see a problem with how it is affecting small business, but it was not important enough to trump character assassination.

There is an old saying, "If you live in a glass house, don't throw rocks". The House of Commons is not a glass house, but we are engaging in rock-throwing instead of a constructive debate and critique of any one aspect of what is being proposed.

If opposition members see opportunities to improve the legislation, I strongly suggest they put them forward. They could put them forward in a constructive manner, and the government would be very open to considering any constructive feedback. This is what we have been engaged in for the last 75 days, and the finance minister continues to be open to hearing feedback on how to improve these suggested changes. I expect to see more changes being implemented.

If there are good ideas and suggestions, I would tell the opposition to put aside these silly motions of character assassination and put forward good suggestions for the finance minister to consider. I know he is open-minded. I know he is working hard for the Canadian economy, and I am certain he will listen to them.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about tax-planning strategies, but what we really saw is topic avoidance and accountability evasion from the government. He called this a silly motion. The motion calls for the finance minister to table documents in the House with respect to his compliance or non-compliance—one of those two—with very clear rules by the Ethics Commissioner. This can happen. Sometimes people forget that they own villas in France. I get it. However, it would help if the minister simply tabled the evidence so that people can see it.

The member asked that we raise other issues with respect to tax changes. I invite him to stay for question period. I think he will see some of that take place in a very short time. What is his problem with voting in favour of a motion that asks for the minister to table the information? If the minister does not want to table the information, is that not quite revealing in and of itself?

Mr. Frank Baylis: Mr. Speaker, my problem is this. We have different sections in government. Different people do different things. For example, we have the Ethics Commissioner. It is the Ethics Commissioner's job to look over these documents, and she has done her job. If there has been an oversight, she will look into it. If we are talking a technicality here, let the commissioner do her job. While she is doing her job, it might be a good idea for the opposition members to do their job.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it strange that my colleague opposite would use metaphors that could so easily be turned against his party. He talked about how people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. Well, maybe the Liberals themselves should heed that old saying, but in their case, it would not be a glass house, it would be a glass villa.

In recent weeks, the government has been going after small businesses and poor people, turning a blind eye to all manner of tax evasion, and, worst of all, tolerating behaviour like that of the Minister of Finance. The fact that he did not disclose how deeply he was involved in the pension fund business when he was making laws affecting that very sector is unacceptable. The Liberals should choose their metaphors carefully.

Does my esteemed colleague see the shame in waiting until now to lower the small business tax rate from 10.5% to 10% and to 9% in the coming years? This is a bald-faced attempt to distract us from the villa issue and the fact that the minister did not disclose everything to the commissioner.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to a number of small business owners for whom this tax cut is no mere distraction. They welcome this measure and are very happy about it. They think it is an excellent initiative on the part of our government, one that was part of our election platform.

I am not sure how to answer the member's question when he claims that small business owners think reducing their tax rate significantly is a distraction. It is by no means a distraction. It is a very important initiative for our economy.

[English]

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if this is not an ethically challenged government, it is clearly incompetent: 10.5 million bucks to a convicted terrorist; the small business tax proposals that are falling flat; losing the northern gateway pipeline; the Petronas energy project; energy east, with \$50 billion in investment down the drain, and thousands and thousands of lost jobs.

I read an article about energy east, and the author described how it was lost. He attributed it to regulatory dysfunction. I wonder if there is a pill to cure that kind of dysfunction.

The minister's excuse for not reporting his villa was that it was only an "administrative" failure. Imagine that. A minister of the crown is saying that it was an early administrative failure. Would the member have a comment on the minister's excuse for why he did not report his villa?

Mr. Frank Baylis: Mr. Speaker, the member touched on a number of issues. I was trying to keep track of them as he was going along, but there were so many. He was all over the place, and I had a hard time catching it.

What I can say is that the finance minister has been doing his job, collaborating in depth with the Ethics Commissioner. The Ethics Commissioner is happy with what she has seen. She has not raised an issue. She is doing her job. She is moving forward with it. It has been disclosed, perhaps not in the exact manner it was supposed to be disclosed, but that can be fixed, and it will be.

● (1345)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be splitting my time with my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

It is going to be hard to follow the comedy show that we just witnessed from our friend from Hastings—Lennox and Addington. I know it is a difficult day for the Liberals on the other side. This is a tough one for them to explain to their constituents about the ethical lapses of the finance minister. Let us just get back to the basics. All we are asking for today is for the finance minister to be completely transparent here and that he follow through with the request of the motion that the House will hopefully adopt later today, to table all the documents that he submitted to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner between November 4, 2015, and July 18, 2017.

A lot of people will ask why that is important. We are talking about the second most powerful person in the cabinet of the Government of Canada. This is the individual who has all the control over the financial levers of our country. This is the individual who has to have the most trust of Canadians, of investors, and of our financial markets. This is the individual who has to make sure he is working in the best interests of Canadians and not of himself. What we have witnessed so far is that this minister hates transparency, hates accountability, and really has a lapse in judgment in trying to circumvent the rules that have been laid out by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

As a former parliamentary secretary, when I was sworn in, I had to immediately comply with the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. There is a complete act called the Conflict of Interest Act for ministers and parliamentary secretaries as well as the book that the Prime Minister himself has updated on the accountable government, a guide for ministers and parliamentary secretaries. We have to look at all the rules that are in there, on which the Minister of Finance himself has refused to follow through. That in itself is something where the minister is really letting down not only his own caucus, but I really feel sorry for all my friends on the other side who have to sit through this miserable situation, listening to the Minister of Finance try to weasel out of this situation and actually have the Prime Minister step in and handle all the questions at a press conference because the minister was not able to do it himself. The Prime Minister was definitely disappointed in his finance minister. I can say that based upon what happened.

In the guidelines, there is a section in chapter IV, part 1, called "Ministerial Conduct". The Prime Minister's own book says:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must act with honesty and must uphold the highest ethical standards so that public confidence and trust in the integrity and impartiality of government are maintained and enhanced.

Business of Supply

Looking at the definition of integrity and as it relates to ethics, we see it says in Wikipedia, “In ethics, integrity is regarded by many as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one’s actions.” We are not getting that when we look at the Minister of Finance and how he has completely dodged the issue of being transparent, of making sure that he has done things to the letter of the law, that all the *is* are dotted and the *is* are crossed. I do not know whether he was trying to find loopholes in the Ethics Commissioner’s guidelines or in the Conflict of Interest Act, because he definitely has broken the law in the way it is defined in the Conflict of Interest Act as it applies to ministers.

I am sure the members of the cabinet have all read the documents and they are all well aware of what needs to be done here, but the thing that struck me the most is that, once they become a public office holder, they have to provide all disclosure to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. In subsection 22(1), the act says:

A reporting public office holder shall, within 60 days after the day on which he or she is appointed as a public office holder, provide a confidential report to the Commissioner.

That is two months, not two years but two months. Let us do the math over there. That never happened, because the French villa was not on that original list. Once they do report it, there is a public declaration, in subsection 25(2), which states, on “certain assets”:

A reporting public office holder shall, within 120 days after the day on which he or she is appointed as a public office holder, make a public declaration of all of his or her assets that are neither controlled assets nor exempt assets.

That is two months beyond the two months that the minister already had, so four months. Let us do the math—it is four months in total—for our Liberal friends.

● (1350)

We heard about the French villa that was reported in July of this year, two full years after the Minister of Finance was sworn in to cabinet. Here is an individual who completely missed the mark, and he is calling it an administrative oversight, which is just unheard of.

It further states, section 26:

(2) The summary statement must contain the following:

(a) for each controlled asset of the reporting public officer holder, and for each asset of the reporting public office holder that the Commissioner has ordered divested under section 30, a description of the asset and the method used to divest it;...

All of his assets would have received direction from the Ethics Commissioner.

It goes on to state that he has to:

(b)...recuse himself or herself under section 30, a description of the matter and information regarding the process to be put in place by the reporting public office holder and others to effect the recusal; and

(c) for any other matter in respect of which the Commissioner has issued an order to the reporting public office holder...

Everyone sitting over there who is a parliamentary secretary or a minister of the crown has had to follow these rules. That is everybody except the Minister of Finance. That is why it is so important that we get the documents from the Ethics Commissioner herself, so that we, as parliamentarians, and Canadians can see whether the integrity of the finance minister is in question. If he said he received direction from the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and somebody in that office said no, he did not

need to put his assets in a blind trust or he did not need to disclose that he has a beautiful villa, owned by a private corporation, in France, possibly earning income from rentals to tourists or people who love the Mediterranean, that we need to find out. The only way to do that is if the Minister of Finance is honest and up front, and provides those documents to all of us in Parliament.

The other part of this is the requirement for divestment of assets through that appointment. Through the divestment, a minister has to either sell them, so that they do not influence the person’s behaviour as a minister of the crown, or put them into a blind trust. When I was sworn in as parliamentary secretary in the previous government, I had to put my little farm into a blind trust. My wife had to be the manager and I was allowed to work on the farm, but not allowed to provide any input into the day-to-day operations of the farm. I was not allowed to talk to any of our clients, some of whom were my buddies. We could process cattle together, move them from pasture to pasture or vaccinate them, anything like that, as long as we were working, but I could not talk about any of the contracts that existed between them, as clients, and myself, as one of the owners of the blind trust.

Therefore, there are rules to follow. We know for a fact that the Minister of Finance did not put his considerable assets in Morneau Shepell into a blind trust. He was sitting on millions of shares worth over \$32 million. As I said, the finance minister is the most important person in cabinet. He handles the finances of this country. He is really the flag-bearer for the most ethical behaviour, and we are not seeing that since he did not put his French villa into a blind trust.

To add insult to injury, we also now find out that Morneau Shepell has a private corporation called Morneau Shepell Bahamas, registered in Barbados, where it gets preferential tax treatment at an income tax rate of 2.5%. Through a tax treaty that Finance Canada negotiated with Barbados, it can repatriate that money back into Morneau Shepell Canada at no Canadian tax level at all. It pays its 2.5% income tax in Barbados, brings the money back here, and redistributes it through dividends to its shareholders, the Minister of Finance being one of the biggest shareholders of the company.

Let us also look at the overall issue of how this has completely hurt the finance minister’s credibility. All we are asking is that he finally be honest, show some integrity, and provide parliamentarians and Canadians with the respect we deserve, the respect that the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner deserves, the respect that everyone involved in this issue deserves by being honest and up front, and disclosing all of the information he has relating to his relationship with the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

● (1355)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have opposed everything that the current Minister of Finance has done. What did the Conservatives do when we decreased taxes on Canada’s middle class? They voted no. What did the Conservatives do when we put on a special tax on the wealthiest 1%? They said no. What do the Conservatives do when we talk about tax fairness? They say no.

Statements by Members

I suggest that the Conservatives have once again found a topic to disagree on with the Minister of Finance. However, I believe that Canadians as a whole will have more faith and trust in what the Ethics Commissioner has to say than they do members of the Conservative Party who have consistently been critical of the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance himself has said that he will follow the advice of the Ethics Commissioner. I understand why we will not follow the advice of the Conservative Party. It is because we believe in Canada's middle class.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North can sit here and yell and scream at the top of his lungs all he wants, because I can tell members that nobody that I have talked to on the small business tax changes trusts the Liberals. They even trust them less because of the actions of the Minister of Finance.

The member can rally on and say that things are just great, but all the Liberals are doing is saying that there is one set of rules for the Liberals and a different set of rules for all the rest of us, and that is not right.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, I wish to table these documents in the House, in both official languages.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. minister.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman will have three minutes remaining in his time for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the question.

We will now go to Statements by Members.

The hon. member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October 11 is International Day of the Girl, a day of celebration proclaimed by the United Nations. Canada has joined other countries in making the issue of the rights of girls front and centre. Canadians recognize the importance of empowering girls and giving them opportunities for real growth.

[*English*]

Empowering girls empowers our communities. Globally, equality for girls starts with access to clean water, education, and health care. It also means ensuring that girls lead lives free of violence, oppression, and discrimination.

[*Translation*]

The International Day of the Girl is an opportunity to celebrate our country's energetic young women and the positive change they initiate.

[*English*]

Last week, on October 11, I had the great privilege of hosting a discussion with students of Champlain College Saint-Lambert. Their enthusiasm, participation, and insights reiterated that girls' rights and the empowerment of younger generations are as crucial today as ever.

[*Translation*]

I want to say a big thank you to the students, professors and directors at Champlain College Saint-Lambert for welcoming me so warmly on the International Day of the Girl.

* * *

[*English*]

THALIDOMIDE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when will the government act to compensate the forgotten survivors of thalidomide? For close to 60 years, these Canadians have suffered from the ravages of this horrible drug that was approved by the government of the day, and as they age their conditions are worsening.

In the spring, the health committee made a series of recommendations to the minister after hearing from thalidomide compensation evaluation experts from around the world. The committee recommended that the Canadian criteria for compensation be re-evaluated, that survivors who have been rejected receive a physical exam, and that the compensation requirements err on the side of compassion.

Another Christmas is fast approaching and these survivors cannot wait another week, month, or year to finally hear some good news from the government. These victims have lived a life of pain, suffering, and discrimination. When will the government do the right thing and help these people?

* * *

● (1400)

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are people of such energy, vision, tenacity, and commitment to community that they become the foundation of the quality of life we all enjoy. Natalie Chapman is such a person. She has devoted herself to building a loving community around those who are socially isolated.

After Natalie served over 20 years as director of the West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped, friends recently gathered to wish her a happy and well-deserved retirement and to honour her remarkable advocacy for those with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Natalie believes deeply that it not only takes a village to raise a child and to care for the vulnerable, but that it also takes goodwill and investment to keep that village strong. Natalie leaves WIAIH a resilient community resource, confidently focused on the future. Natalie has created a lasting legacy and set the bar high for what it means to care for and fashion a community that truly includes everyone.

*Statements by Members***WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY**

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one in three Canadians will experience a mental illness or substance use disorder, or SUD, in his or her lifetime. Shockingly, more than 10 Canadians die by suicide each day. Suicide rates of indigenous youth in Canada are among the highest in the world. More than half of Canadian adults, and almost half of Canadian youth, say they cannot cope with unexpected difficult problems and day-to-day demands. Many people suffer in silence.

World Mental Health Day provides each of us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on the importance of mental health and how we can help those living with mental illness. That is why it is so important to recognize World Mental Health Day each year on October 10.

I encourage the government to officially designate October 10 as World Mental Health Day in Canada through resolution or legislation.

I thank advocates like Carol Todd for their tireless efforts to raise awareness of mental health issues.

* * *

DAPHNE CARUANA GALIZIA

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay my respects to Ms. Daphne Caruana Galizia, the Maltese journalist whose life was tragically cut short yesterday when a bomb exploded in her car shortly after she had left her home. Ms. Caruana Galizia bravely investigated corruption and organized crime in Malta.

We unequivocally condemn this barbaric attack, and express our deepest sympathy to her family, and to all those affected by her tragic death. We must continue to support journalists from around the world in their pursuit of the truth, and the preservation of the fourth estate. As a former journalist, I praise Ms. Caruana Galizia's dedication to truth, and call upon my colleagues in this House to stand united against this horrific attack.

* * *

DIWALI

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians will join Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and others from around the world on October 19 to celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights, which symbolizes good over evil. Diwali is now an international event, even acknowledged by the United Nations.

Tomorrow evening I will be hosting the 17th National Diwali Celebration 2017 on Parliament Hill. We have come a long way since I first inaugurated this event back in 1998. We are the first western democracy to celebrate Diwali in Parliament. The success of this truly Canadian national event is due to the participation of the Indo-Canadian community.

This year too, more than 30 temples and community organizations from Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, and Ottawa will help me organize this event. I invite all my colleagues to join me tomorrow at the event. I want to wish everyone a happy Diwali.

HISPANIC DAY ON THE HILL

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a special day as we celebrate the second annual Hispanic Day on the Hill.

As the daughter of a Mexican immigrant, the Hispanic and Latin American communities are very close to my heart. I am blessed that in Davenport, the riding I represent, there is a thriving, vibrant, and growing Spanish-speaking community, whether from Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, or many other Latin American countries.

In a world where we see increasing intolerance, Canada is a beacon of light, showing that diversity is a strength. Indeed, the contributions of our Spanish and Latin American communities enrich Canadian society and culture.

I would like to close by warmly extending an offer to all my colleagues in the House to join us for our second annual Hispanic Day on the Hill celebrations in the Speaker's chamber today from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

[Member spoke in Spanish]

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●(1405)

KATHLEEN RICE

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Women's History Month in recognition of Kathleen Rice, Canada's first female professional prospector.

Kate was born in 1882 to a wealthy industrial family in St. Marys, Ontario, attended the University of Toronto and graduated in mathematics and physics in 1906.

Kate recognized early on the injustice of her half-pay teaching salary and decided to join the Manitoba gold rush. To add to the insult, as a non-person, Kate's plan to homestead in The Pas meant she had to have her brother sign the papers.

A sharpshooter, survivor, brilliant prospector, and Cree linguist, Kate staked many claims in Manitoba on her significant mineral discoveries, and was a correspondent for *The Globe and Mail*. Kate loved the majestic beauty of Manitoba's north, and for 40 years lived in a modest log cabin near Rice Island in Manitoba.

This month, let us stake our claim and recognize Kate Rice as an extraordinary role model.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time to start saying no to the deliberate destruction of the western Canadian economy.

Statements by Members

These Liberals are very carefully sabotaging natural resource development and the prosperity that comes with it. For decades western Canadian natural resources have led the Canadian economy.

Now the government insists on interfering with that prosperity. The hypocrisy on pipeline approvals, the politicization of the regulatory approval process, and the hundreds of billions of dollars of lost investment are crippling the western Canadian economy.

On top of all of that comes an even larger threat, the carbon tax that the Liberals are about to impose. This tax is built on lies, that it will somehow change our environment, that it will be fiscally insignificant, and that it will somehow be revenue neutral, whatever that is. The reality is that this is a massive tax grab by irresponsible governments, that it will exclude some of the worst polluters by letting them buy their way out, and that western Canada will be hardest hit.

From the west, it looks like this Prime Minister is trying to finish the job that his father started.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Small Business Week.

As a small business owner, I know first hand the hard work and sacrifices required to start and grow a business. Small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy, accounting for 30% of our GDP and employing over eight million Canadians, including many in Surrey.

Not only have we cut the small business tax rate by 2%, we have launched Innovative Solutions Canada, which allows small businesses to access government procurement tenders, and we have increased the capital available to entrepreneurs through the \$400 million venture capital catalyst initiative. Under our government's leadership, the BDC has announced a new \$50 million fund to support women in tech and has exceeded its lending target of \$700 million for women entrepreneurs.

All of this has made Canada the best country in the G7 to start a business. To all middle-class entrepreneurs and small business owners across British Columbia, across Canada—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Niagara Centre.

* * *

MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is marine day, a day to celebrate Great Lakes-St. Lawrence shipping. The Chamber of Marine Commerce is here celebrating with us on Parliament Hill today.

It may surprise some to learn that Great Lakes-St. Lawrence shipping contributes 227,000 well-paying jobs to Canada's economy, while moving 160 million metric tonnes of cargo annually. Annually, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence shipping brings in \$35 billion in business revenue and contributes \$5 billion in tax revenues.

In addition to a stellar safety record, this method of shipping also results in an 84% reduction in carbon emissions versus trucks and

trains. In the Niagara region, the marine industry plays an integral role in the regional economy. Forty million metric tonnes of cargo passes through the Welland Canal annually on over 3,000 vessels.

I rise today to congratulate all the hardworking people in this critical industry who contribute so much to the success of Canada-U.S. trade.

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• (1410)

CHRISTOPHER SEGUIN

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to Melissa Seguin and her young sons, Logan and Harrison, for the loss of their father and her husband, Christopher Seguin. I have known Christopher for over nine years in his time as vice-president of advancement at Thompson Rivers University. He generated millions of dollars for student awards, ground-breaking research, and major buildings. Most recently he stepped up to the plate and provided leadership while supporting the B.C. wildfire evacuees. With the Rotary Club of Kamloops, he established the Starfish Pack program to help feed young children, and he volunteered for the Kamloops Food Bank for the past decade.

Sadly, Christopher was an exceptional leader of our community who died at age 39 from an accidental overdose. This highlights a crisis that we have on our hands. No one is immune. I always thought that one day I would be paying tribute to Christopher in this House and looking up at him in the visitors' gallery, not delivering a memorial to a good friend. Despite our best efforts, we need to do more. I call on the government to call a national emergency.

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[*Translation*]

MONTREAL NORTH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of its 70th anniversary, I would like to highlight the contribution of the Montreal North chamber of commerce and industry, located in the riding of Bourassa. The chamber of commerce and industry is a key player in Montreal North's economic development. It has been able to modernize and adapt the services it has provided over the years.

Recently, and much to its credit, the chamber of commerce and industry made room for young people in this vitally important sector that is the economy. I commend the outgoing chair of the board of directors, Ms. Gaetana Colella, for her years of service, and extend my best wishes to the new chair, Sylvain Picard, and to the board of directors, as they continue to attract and support investors in Montreal North.

DRUMMONDVILLE REGION

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 2017 is a special year for a few of the organizations that are the pride of the people of Drummondville. In arts and culture, the Maison des arts Desjardins Drummondville is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. There is no doubt that this cultural centre has contributed to the booming performing arts and visual arts scene both locally and regionally. I would like to acknowledge the entire team at Maison des arts and its general and artistic director, Marie-Pierre Simoneau.

In the world of sports, the Requins de Drummondville swim club is also celebrating its 50th anniversary. This swim club has helped make swimming accessible within our community and has trained swimmers who have gone on to succeed on the Canadian sports scene.

I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of the volunteers on the club's board of directors, chaired by Jacques Thibault, as well as head coach Amélie Poirier. Thank you to these organizations for making Drummondville and the region shine.

* * *

[English]

B.C. WILDFIRES

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past summer British Columbia was ravaged by wildfires, and as difficult as it has been, we have seen fellow Canadians step up to help their neighbours. The City of Fort St. John deployed five crews over the summer. It is my privilege to honour them now, as follows: Shift Captain Brent Morgan, Captain Ryan Tancock, Captain Simon Caughill, Matt Crompton, James Grant, Ryan Bowie, Jasen Donszelmann, Adam Horst, Craig Faulkner, Chris Austin, Matt Troiano, Matt Dawes, Gordon Mckay, Leo Sullivan, and Brandon Moore. I would also especially like to mention Chief Fred Burrows, who deployed during their first week at Williams Lake and took on the role of task group leader.

On behalf of all residents of Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies in British Columbia, I thank all the firefighters and first responders who worked so selflessly this past summer to battle the B.C. wildfires. We thank them from the bottom of all of our hearts.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Twenty-five years ago, the United Nations declared that this day would be devoted to the poor, the vulnerable, and those who need our help. Today is an opportunity to acknowledge, support, and listen to the concerns of those experiencing poverty, and to discuss and take action to eliminate poverty.

As chair of the human resources committee, poverty is an issue of great importance to me. Our committee spent the last year travelling across the country to produce an in-depth poverty reduction report. We analyzed the current state of poverty in Canada, as well as effective solutions to reduce its occurrence.

Oral Questions

I am looking forward to reading the national poverty reduction strategy when the minister releases it. Poverty is a critical issue, and those of us in the House must always consider our decisions as they affect the most vulnerable among us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1415)

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the other side of the House has demonstrated blatant hypocrisy.

During the last election, the Prime Minister accused local business owners of being tax cheats, and yet, his right-hand man, the Minister of Finance, hid from Canadians for two years the fact that he owns a private company overseas. His own minister avoided paying taxes in Canada.

When will the Liberals come clean with Canadians?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone works with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure full compliance with all her recommendations and legislation with respect to conflicts of interest.

The Minister of Finance has full confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and her recommendations. I would also like to say that Parliament has full confidence that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner will carry out her work in an impartial manner and with integrity.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): That is preposterous, Mr. Speaker.

In the eyes of the Prime Minister, a farmer from Lac-Saint-Jean is a tax cheat; a restaurant owner in Old Quebec is a tax cheat; the owner of the corner garage is a tax cheat; the family members running a family business are tax cheats. However, he sees no problem with his right-hand man, the Minister of Finance, stashing money overseas in a private company for the past two years.

Why do the Prime Minister and his minister think they are above the law?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Small Business and Tourism, I am very proud of the announcements we are making.

The changes we are making reflect what we have heard from Canadians. The income sprinkling proposals will be simplified to help family businesses. As we make the system fairer, we are also fulfilling our commitment to lower the small business tax rate. This rate was 11% in 2015 and will be lowered to 9% by 2019.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wanted to take all the questions yesterday, but he will not answer any questions today.

The law requires that ministers put their assets in a blind trust within 120 days of being appointed, but we have learned that the finance minister chose not to put his family fortune into a blind trust. The law is in place to prevent conflicts of interest, and Canadians deserve to know whether the minister is using his position to benefit his family company.

The question is simple. When did the finance minister sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since taking office, the Minister of Finance has worked with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that her every recommendation and all conflict of interest rules were followed.

As the Minister of Small Business and Tourism, I am very pleased with the announcement we made yesterday. I am very pleased we are working on behalf of Canadians. I am very pleased we are working on behalf of our job creators. This week is Small Business Week, and we must thank our job creators. That is why yesterday's news was excellent news that we would be reducing the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019. We will continue to do the good work they expect us to do.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no small business owner expects that the government will target them and call them tax cheats. That is what the government has been doing for months now.

These are the facts. The law requires ministers to either put their shares in a blind trust or sell them within 120 days of being appointed. We know the finance minister chose not to place his Morneau Shepell shares into a blind trust, so again, this question is very simple. When did the finance minister sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, as I am sure all members do, works closely with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that the rules are followed. All recommendations that were made to him, he accepted. Every year there is a review of the paperwork, and we will continue to work with her to ensure that all rules are in compliance.

It is Small Business Week. It is an exciting week for our job creators. We have committed to reducing the small business rate to 9% by 2019. More so, we listened to exactly what their concerns were to ensure that any rules will work in—

• (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the one thing we can always count on with the Liberals is that eventually they start acting like Liberals.

The minister has travelled the country for months calling pizza shop owners and farmers tax cheats, accusing all kinds of hard-working Canadians of trying to avoid paying their fair share. The whole time, it was he himself who was avoiding paying his fair share.

Is there anyone over there who is even slightly embarrassed about the hypocrisy of the finance minister keeping his shares out of a blind trust and not disclosing this to the public?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a commitment to Canadians to ensure that their voices were heard in this place, and that is exactly what members of Parliament are doing.

We appreciate the constructive feedback that is coming to the government to ensure that any rules that are implemented work in the best interests of Canadians, especially our job creators, our small businesses. Those are the very people we work hard for every single day.

Yesterday there was an excellent news announcement. We will reduce the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% by 2019. We are not moving ahead with the capital gains exemption, because we listened to farmers and fishers. We want to ensure that intergenerational transfers of businesses continue. We will support—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): That is a funny answer, Mr. Speaker, because this morning the commissioner said that she never told the finance minister not to place his assets in a blind trust.

[Translation]

Yesterday, my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley wrote to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, asking her to launch an investigation into the personal assets of the Minister of Finance and into Bill C-27, which he is sponsoring.

We now know that the minister did not place his fortune into a blind trust as a number of people, including the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, believed. He believed it because it made so much sense.

My question is simple. Why did he not do so?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, since he took the position, the Minister of Finance has been working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to make sure that all her recommendations and the legislation on conflicts of interest are followed to the letter.

The Minister of Finance has full confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and her recommendations. He is ready to do whatever is necessary to avoid a real or perceived conflict of interest.

I must also mention that the commissioner has full confidence in Parliament's ability to do its job impartially and honestly.

Oral Questions

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the troubling thing about this whole story is that the minister did not have the sense to see that his situation was problematic. Nobody can deny that, if Bill C-27 becomes law, Morneau Shepell will benefit from a significant boost to both its business and its revenue.

As a major shareholder in the company, the Minister of Finance stands to gain personally from the passage of this bill.

I know my definition of “conflict of interest”. I would like the minister to share his definition.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Small Business Week in Canada, and as the Minister of Small Business and Tourism, I would like to congratulate them for the work they do.

The changes we are making are a direct response to what we have heard from Canadians. The income sprinkling proposals will be simplified to help family businesses. As we work to make the system fairer, we will keep our promise to lower the small business tax rate, which was 11% in 2015 and will drop to 9% in 2019.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not just the opposition that believed that the finance minister's massive investments were in a blind trust. That is what many Liberals believed as well. Earlier this month, the member for Spadina—Fort York tweeted that the finance minister's shares in Morneau Shepell “were put in an arms length blind trust [when] he was sworn in 2 years ago.”

This is about a serious breach and potential conflict of interest. Will my friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development stand in the House and explain when he was told this untruth and who told it to him?

• (1425)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance has said on many occasions, he is working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He will continue to do this important work.

What is more important is that it is Small Business Week, and this government has committed to reducing the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. This government has committed to listening and engaging with Canadians. Not only have we listened, we have responded to the very real challenges and concerns they are facing. We will continue to ensure that the tax system is more equitable and works for more Canadians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so I guess it is not just the finance minister who is not taking questions today. My friend from Toronto must have gotten the PM shove, as they call it.

This is an important question, because we may be looking at the most blatant conflict of interest in modern Canadian history. The finance minister introduced Bill C-27. This bill would significantly benefit Morneau Shepell and all of its shareholders, like the finance

minister. He has not divested nor placed his millions of shares in a blind trust.

What is worse: this massive, troubling conflict of interest, or the fact that Liberals do not seem to think there is a problem in the first place?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Small Business and Tourism, I will say that I am very proud that this government is actually listening and engaging with our job creators to ensure that the tax system works for them. The minister has full confidence in the Ethics Commissioner and her recommendations and is willing to take any further steps to avoid conflicts, or any perception of conflicts, as deemed appropriate by the Ethics Commissioner. Moreover, this government is taking action to ensure that the economy continues to grow and that our small businesses continue to create jobs in their communities, benefiting the entire community. We will continue to work hard on behalf of small business owners.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance started by saying he had revealed all of his holdings to the Ethics Commissioner. Now we know he has an offshore company in France that he did not disclose.

He then said to the media, “I suspect all my assets will go into a blind trust.” That was two years ago. We now know that this did not happen either. Finally, he claimed that the Ethics Commissioner told him he should not put his holdings in a blind trust. Today she testified under oath that she told him no such thing.

We cannot believe the Minister of Finance. When did he sell his shares?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the House. The Minister of Finance has always been very transparent with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and he has always worked proactively with her to ensure that all the rules in place and her recommendations are followed. He is always working proactively with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He even wrote to the commissioner seeking another meeting to see if there were additional recommendations that might apply. He is committed to following every recommendation that the commissioner may have in order to remain in full compliance with the rules that govern us all, in the House.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance had spokespeople from Morneau Shepell tell the media that his Morneau Shepell shares were in a blind trust. He had the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families tell me on Twitter that his holdings were in a blind trust. He told the media himself two years ago that he suspected that his holdings would go into a blind trust. We know now that none of that was true. We also know that Morneau Shepell has holdings in the tax haven of Barbados.

When did the minister sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Minister of Finance has always worked in collaboration with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in an entirely transparent manner to ensure that he is in compliance with the rules that govern all of us in the House. We have confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and the minister has even written the commissioner seeking another meeting to discuss his assets and to follow every instruction she might have regarding his personal assets.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they may trust the Ethics Commissioner, but how can Canadians trust these Liberals? As of late yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary for Urban Affairs was still falsely claiming that the finance minister's assets were in a blind trust. The Prime Minister himself indicated that it was the Ethics Commissioner's responsibility in these matters, yet she testified today that it was the minister's choice not to put the shares in a blind trust.

The daily revelations of the finance minister show nothing but hypocrisy, and I want to know one simple thing. When did the finance minister sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

• (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Minister of Finance has been working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner from the very beginning of his term to ensure that she had a full picture of his assets and that he would be in compliance with all rules governing us here in the House. He is also committed to acting on any and all recommendations she might make following a request that he initiated to meet with her.

If I may, I would add that the Minister of Finance is a man of great integrity who has dedicated himself to public service for the past two years with a record that makes others pale by comparison and is the envy of the world: the strongest growth in the G7 and inclusive prosperity for all Canadians.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister seems to have one set of rules for himself and a completely other set for everybody else. He made the choice to attack hard-working Canadian entrepreneurs while protecting his own personal

wealth. He is the one who is hiding an offshore account, and he will not tell Canadians why he did not put his vast personal wealth into a blind trust, like the law requires.

Let me be clear. This was his choice, always his choice, and these are his ethics we are talking about. I just want to know, when did the finance minister sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House has full confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and the Minister of Finance is committed to working with her. He requested a meeting with her in order to make sure he was following any recommendations she might make to him. As he has done since the beginning of his term, since he took office, and even before that, he will continue to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, as he has always done. That is what is expected of all members of the House.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue of critical importance. The Minister of Finance is the architect of every one of Canada's economic and tax policies. Morneau Shepell is a multi-billion dollar company on Bay Street that applies Canada's tax policies every day. It is a perfect example of a conflict of interest right out of the gate.

The question is clear: when did the Minister of Finance sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from day one, the Minister of Finance has met with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and worked with her to ensure that he followed all of her recommendations and that he was in compliance with the rules that govern us all. He is committed to doing the same moving forward, again in close collaboration with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who has the full confidence of the House.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am still thankful for one thing: the member for Louis-Hébert has been authorized by the Prime Minister to answer questions, unlike the Minister of Finance. At least that is something. Seriously, the situation is completely untenable; we are talking about the moral authority of the Minister of Finance of Canada, here.

When did the Minister of Finance sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Minister of Finance has worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner since he first took office. This has been ongoing and he asked for a meeting with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that he was in full compliance at all times. That is expected of all members of the House. If I may say so, public service is important to the Minister of Finance, who, in the past two years, has given Canadians the strongest growth of the past decade and reduced child poverty by 40%. I am very proud to serve with him.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was confirmed today that the Americans are demanding an end to our supply management system within the next 10 years. They are also demanding 5% of our market. When it comes to protecting our supply management system, the Liberals are certainly used to kowtowing to our trade partners. For us, however, the protection of our supply management system is non-negotiable, and we will not allow it to be chipped away any further.

To avoid repeating the same errors that were made with CETA and the trans-Pacific partnership 11, can the minister confirm today that the Liberals will not allow the agreement to be chipped away any further?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government strongly supports Canada's supply management system and Canadian families and producers. Our government remains committed to listening to what Canadians have to say about international trade. We recently held a round table on NAFTA with Canadian farmers, including dairy, poultry, and egg producers. The proposals our American partners have made regarding supply management are unacceptable, and we will continue to support the supply management system and all agricultural interests.

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, supporting supply management means saying “no”. Dairy is officially on the table. The U.S. has called for a definitive end to Canada's supply managed system and is demanding immediate further access to our markets. This is outrageous. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives have no problem putting our supply managed sector up for grabs in trade deals like TPP and CETA, but this time, the Liberals must protect our industry and say “no”.

Will the minister drop the spin and finally tell the U.S. that supply management is not on the table?

•(1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are the party that implemented supply management, and we are going to continue to defend it. Dairy trade between Canada and the United States massively favours the U.S., by a ratio of five to one. For eggs and poultry, the U.S. has seen an increase of 209% since NAFTA was signed. The U.S. has a trade surplus of \$246 million. I want to reassure the House and our dairy, poultry, and egg farmers that we are going to defend our supply management system.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is disturbing to discover that the Finance Minister broke the law by hiding his offshore corporation for two years. It is even more disturbing to now find out that he did not put his millions of dollars in shares in a blind trust as required by the law. It must be because he

sold the shares, otherwise he broke the law. Therefore, when did the Finance Minister sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, since the start of his term, the Minister of Finance has been working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that he is in full compliance with all the rules that govern us and that he follows any recommendation that she may make.

Just today, the minister wrote to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner seeking a meeting. He is open to any recommendation she may make, such as a blind trust, for example.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are the same talking points as on billionaire island and the Liberal cash for access fundraisers. I asked a very simple question.

The Minister of Finance has said hundreds of times that his government is open and transparent, but he refuses to come clean with Canadians. He has been hiding the ownership of his offshore corporation. Now he will not come clean with Canadians about his business interest that put him into this conflict of interest.

When will the minister finally come clean with Canadians and tell them whether he still owns shares of Morneau Shepell?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the start of his mandate, the Minister of Finance has always been open and transparent with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He is committed to continuing on that path, and to taking any steps she may recommend to make sure that he is in full conformity with the rules that govern members of Parliament, parliamentary secretaries, and ministers in the House.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rules are very simple and apply to every one of the 338 MPs here: we must disclose our assets within 60 days.

There is good reason to wonder whether the Minister of Finance is working in his own interest and that of the Liberal Party or in the interest of all Canadians. We know that he did not disclose his personal affairs for more than two years.

My question is so simple that I am not sure the parliamentary secretary will attempt to answer it.

Does the minister still own shares in his company? If so, when will he sell them?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Minister of Finance will continue to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to comply with the rules that govern us.

Oral Questions

The member wants to know who the Minister of Finance is working for. I can tell him that the minister is working in the interest of the 300,000 children we have lifted out of poverty with the Canada child benefit, of the 437,000-plus jobs we have created, most of them full-time, and of the strongest growth we have seen in the past 10 years.

These factors are the reason Canadian entrepreneurs are prospering. Our Minister of Finance is working in the interest of Canadians, regardless of their income or origins.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when he was elected, the Minister of Finance held about \$30 million in shares in Morneau Shepell. When he was appointed finance minister, he promised to put his fortunes in a blind trust, but he broke that promise.

For the last two years as finance minister, he has been making decisions that could have directly helped his family business. We know he has gone out of his way to protect his family fortune from any negative tax changes.

When will the Prime Minister stop sheltering his Minister of Finance? Let him answer the question. When did he sell his shares in Morneau Shepell?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me set the record straight for my colleague.

The Minister of Finance wrote to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner today seeking a meeting. He is committed to following up on all of her recommendations regarding his personal affairs. He made that commitment upon becoming Minister of Finance, and he has honoured it ever since. He has been working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner since the very beginning of his term.

* * *

• (1440)

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that millions of Canadians cannot afford the medicines they need. The PBO confirms that we can provide prescription coverage to every single Canadian, while saving billions of dollars.

Later today, the House will vote on an NDP motion to start negotiations with the provinces and territories within one year to create universal pharmacare. This is a common-sense proposal, sound public policy that will help millions and save billions.

Will the Liberals join us and support pharmacare for all Canadians?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians pay too much for prescription drugs. Our government is taking bold action now to bring down the prices, while we also explore the need for a national formulary. We joined the provinces and territories as members of the pan-Canadian

Pharmaceutical Alliance. Also, in budget 2017 we are investing over \$140 million to help improve access to pharmaceuticals.

These actions will save Canadians money as we continue to work with provinces and territories to make prescription drug prices more affordable and more accessible to all Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that more than 60 people died from opioid overdoses in Montreal this fall, and the situation is only getting worse across Canada.

A number of stakeholders are calling on the government to declare a state of emergency. Even President Trump recognizes that the situation in the United States calls for a protracted battle and significant funding.

What is the government waiting for? When will it declare the opioid crisis a Canada-wide emergency?

[English]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in a national public health crisis in Canada and we are responding in a way that is comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and also evidence based. We recently announced an investment of \$7.5 million that will enhance the development of evidence-based practices that could be used by those dealing with this crisis on the ground. These build on our investment in budget 2017 and many actions to date.

* * *

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is both the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and Housing on the Hill Day. Given the recent poverty reduction conference and the unprecedented investments over the past two budgets, we know that fighting poverty and meeting Canada's housing challenges are at the forefront of this government's agenda.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tell the House what he is doing on those important issues?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Vancouver Centre for being such a strong advocate of a more inclusive and more fair society.

Our government believes that housing is the cornerstone of the lives of families and communities. We are going to announce, in the next few weeks, the first-ever national housing strategy, which will be a key input in our poverty reduction strategy. We look forward to building on those strategies to make sure that all Canadians have a real and fair chance to be well and to succeed in our society.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I was in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, and I met with dairy producers who are worried about their future. What worries them is the Liberals' doublespeak about supply management. Although the Minister of Foreign Affairs tried in vain to put the toothpaste back in the tube, her parliamentary secretary was very clear. When it comes to supply management, there is room for negotiation with the U.S.

Why is the Liberal government ready to negotiate and thereby jeopardize the future of dairy, egg, and poultry farmers?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully in favour of supply management and it will continue to defend it. As I said earlier, dairy trade between Canada and the U.S. massively favours the U.S., by a ratio of five to one. Canada is the second largest export market for dairy products in the United States, surpassed only by Mexico. The minister and I have made it clear that we will defend supply management and the system in place.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Those are just words, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister think that farmers are scheming to save on taxes. Mr. Wolfson, their economic adviser, claims family farms do not even exist.

Could it be that the parliamentary secretary was misquoted?

Here are his exact words when he spoke of supply management in Denton on October 11:

[English]

“Is there room to discuss and negotiate? Of course.”

[Translation]

Of course.

When will the government stop the doublespeak and abandon its plan to open supply management to negotiations with Washington?

●(1445)

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government strongly supports supply management, farmers and their families. As we have said from the very start in the House, we will continue to defend producers from the Americans. I also said that the United States' proposals are unacceptable. Therefore, we will continue to support our dairy, poultry and egg producers and all of our agricultural interests.

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives know that protecting Canadian farmers from unfair competition and dumping is critical to maintaining economic stability in rural communities.

American negotiators are aggressively pushing to unlimited access to Canada's supply managed agricultural sectors. This threatens farmers across Canada, including those who produce milk, eggs, and poultry. Can Canadian farmers trust the Liberals to

preserve the family farm? Does the government have a plan to protect Canadians' way of life?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is the biggest market to the United States, bigger than China, Japan, and U.K. combined. As members know, we are dealing with the most protectionist U.S. government since the 1930s.

We defend supply management. We believe in the family farms. We would like to encourage our neighbours to the south to emulate the good example set by our negotiations in the CETA trade issues.

Having said this, within NAFTA there are certain things we cannot accept and we will not accept. We will continue to defend our values.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary for Canada-U.S. relations clearly knows how to win friends and influence people in the U.S. Just three days after he said he was open to negotiating supply management, the Americans tabled their offer. They want an end to supply management.

Under Conservative governments, the Americans respected our system of supply management, but the Liberal government is literally ready to sell the farm. When will that member and the government stop saying one thing to Canadian farmers and another thing to their friends in Washington?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House, and those who are fortunate enough to be on our portion of the other side, believe in supply management. Indeed, everyone in this House, with the exception of certain members of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, believe in supply management. The same is true of the gang opposite.

We are delighted to defend supply management and will do so at every opportunity.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the current government's self-imposed deadline to fix the Phoenix boondoggle came and went. Last weekend, when asked for a new deadline, the Treasury Board president said, “I could pull a figure out of the air and give it to you, but I'd rather tell the truth.”

Of course, the truth is that the government does not have a plan to fix Phoenix. Therefore, my question for the minister is simple. We know you do not have a plan to fix Phoenix, but when will you have a plan to have a plan?

The Speaker: Order, please. I will have to remind the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan to direct his comments to the Chair. I think he was here. We will not talk about who was here and when and all of that, but yesterday I mentioned to members that of course, if they say “you” in here, they are referring to the Speaker, and I do not think he meant to refer to the Speaker.

The hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement

Oral Questions

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that hard-working public servants are not paid the money they are owed. Recently, an independent third-party report clarified that decisions made by the previous government put this project at a significant risk and exposed it to significant risk of failure.

We are doing everything we can in the areas of governance, partnerships, business processes, and capacity to make sure that public servants get the money they are owed. We will not stop until this is fixed.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I am having trouble hearing what people are saying, and I have to hear them so we know if there is someone breaking any rules.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been responsible for this fiasco for two years now.

Even the senior director at IBM Canada who designed Phoenix admitted yesterday evening that the system was flawed. However, neither the company that designed the system nor the government seems to know how much longer it will take for 150,000 people to be paid correctly and on time, of course. I will ask the question one more time.

Does anyone know how long workers will have to wait for this disaster to be behind us?

• (1450)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that public servants are not getting the salary they are owed. We are taking substantive measures to resolve this problem, including a \$140-million investment in recruiting, hiring, and training new employees, emergency pay advances, and opening up satellite offices, among other things. We will leave nothing to chance.

* * *

[*English*]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bombardier received millions of dollars in grants from the Government of Canada to develop the C Series. The public funds were given to a Canadian corporation to develop a Canadian expertise. However, yesterday we learned that Bombardier sold a majority stake in the C Series to a foreign corporation, Airbus. Therefore, my question is very simple. Will the government immediately take action to recover the millions of dollars that should have been given to Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the joint venture, the repayment terms have not changed. What I do not understand is what the member opposite and the official opposition have against the aerospace sector. When we invested in research and development, they opposed us. When duties were imposed on

Canadian airplanes, they went missing. Now we have more market access, which means more production and more jobs in Canada, and again they are opposing this. What do they have against the aerospace sector and good-quality jobs in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not big fans of the secret agreements that the Government of Canada negotiated with Bombardier.

The minister told us that Bombardier will have to reimburse the money. That is simple enough. Now, it is doing business with a new company, a foreign company. My question for the minister is quite simple.

When will taxpayers be reimbursed for the money that was given to a Canadian company to develop expertise here in Canada? When will Canadians be reimbursed?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports the aerospace sector and we will continue to work hard for the aerospace sector.

[*English*]

Let me be very clear. Under the Investment Canada Act, the process that I oversee, we will make sure we get maximum economic benefit. That means the head office will be here in Canada. That means production will be here in Canada. That means good quality jobs will be here in Canada, jobs that pay, on average, 60% more than other manufacturing jobs.

We will always defend Canada's national interests, and we will always defend the aerospace sector and the good-quality jobs from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Arnold Viarsen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we expect support for Alberta, not Alabama.

Yesterday, Bombardier announced that the French company Airbus would receive a majority stake in the Bombardier C Series aircraft. Now Airbus cannot really lose here, and Bombardier cannot really lose either. After all, they are riding high on millions of Canadian taxpayers' dollars. Do we know who stands to lose? It is Canadian taxpayers.

Can the minister guarantee Canadian taxpayers will be fully repaid by Bombardier before this transaction is approved?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I do not know why the members opposite continue to undermine our aerospace sector.

This is an anchor company that has made a world-class plane. Now this plane has access to the world. It has access to global markets. That means more production. That means more jobs.

What do the members opposite have against this? We will continue to support our aerospace sector, and we will do our due diligence. We will do our homework under the Investment Canada Act to maximize economic benefits for all Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, creative industries are an integral part of the economy. We know that our francophone creators are among the most respected in the world. Recently, the Minister of Canadian Heritage unveiled her vision for Creative Canada, which calls for a major investment to help our creators through the Canada Media Fund.

Can the minister give us more details about her vision for this major investment?

• (1455)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for her question and for her excellent work. As part of Creative Canada, the government will, starting in 2018, increase its contribution to the Canada Media Fund in order to provide it with stable funding. With that new investment, we are directly supporting jobs for our authors, producers, directors, actors, and technical crews. Last year, the fund invested \$117 million in francophone projects in the country. We are committed to supporting our creators.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Liberals are desperate for money when they have to start taxing discounted hamburgers and other employee discounts.

The Minister of National Revenue claims that she has asked officials to fix the problem, but she will not disclose to us just how she plans on doing that.

This will not hurt those among us who own French villas, but it will mean higher taxes for those who are hard-working Canadians, such as single moms, first-time employees, new Canadians, and young workers.

Will the minister finally table in this House the instructions that she sent to her officials, or is this just simply another broken Liberal promise?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the start of our mandate, the government has been focused on helping the middle class. The documents in question did not reflect our government's intentions. I repeat, the rules have not changed. We will continue to ensure that our actions support the middle class. As the Prime Minister has said, we will not be targeting retail employees' discounts.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I met with residents of the Post 83 Co-operative in my riding,

and they are very worried. Forty-five families could lose their homes when the federal government pulls funding from co-operative housing next year.

Given the looming expiry of co-operative operating agreements across Canada, will the government agree to make this funding permanent and protect the housing for low- and middle-income residents?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for his question, which is exactly what we want to hear: the kind of housing support that the federal government needs to provide to all sorts of housing providers, including co-operatives and not-for-profit housing providers.

I had the privilege of meeting many of them this morning. They are keen on working with us for the long term. They have waited for us for a long time, and we are back.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indigenous Canadians make up 4% of Canada's population but 25% of the federal prison population. We know that there are historical and systemic issues that have combined to cause this problem, and that is why the government has been focusing on bringing about socio-economic change in collaboration with indigenous communities.

Will the Minister of Public Safety tell us what he is doing to ensure that indigenous people involved in the criminal justice system will receive the support they need to rehabilitate and heal, which ultimately makes Canadian communities safer?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Northwest Territories for his work.

The overrepresentation of indigenous people in our criminal justice system is an intolerable situation, and we are working very hard to address it. Yesterday, I was pleased to announce an investment of \$10 million in the indigenous community corrections initiative to support community-based, culturally relevant projects providing alternatives to incarceration and supporting safe reintegration. It is part of \$110 million in the last budget to help fix systemic problems in the criminal justice system.

*Oral Questions***HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today human rights activists and leading members of the Muslim community brought a petition to the House of Commons asking the government for stronger action on the atrocities being committed against the Rohingya. We add our voices to theirs, as we have for over a year and half. Specifically, petition organizer Fareed Khan said he would like to be able to ask the Prime Minister why he did not raise this issue during his speech to the UN. Mr. Khan cannot ask the Prime Minister that question directly, so I will.

Why did the Prime Minister not speak about the Rohingya during his UN General Assembly speech?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everybody in this government is seized with the issue of the Rohingya. We know that the responsibility for ending the persecution of the Rohingya falls squarely upon the commander-in-chief, the military leadership in Myanmar, and Aung San Suu Kyi. On September 30, the minister spoke directly with the commander-in-chief, and the minister said to him that the violators of human rights must be held accountable, humanitarian access into the region must be permitted, and the Annan report must be implemented. Canada's ambassador to Myanmar has joined 50 other foreign ambassadors to visit the Rakhine State. We continue to be seized with playing a role in resolving this situation.

* * *

● (1500)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our agricultural sector received a death threat from the American government yesterday.

By calling for the abolition of supply management, American negotiators are attacking our milk producers, our poultry farmers, and our regions. Does anyone really think that we would let this slide? Let me say it in a way that everyone will understand: no way.

Will the government stand up and refuse to abandon our farmers by immediately walking away from the negotiating table any time supply management is mentioned?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government strongly supports supply management, farmers, and their families.

Our government remains committed to listening to Canadians on international trade issues. We recently had a round table on NAFTA with Canadian farmers, including dairy, egg, and poultry producers. Our American partners' proposals regarding supply management are unacceptable. We will continue to support our dairy, egg, and poultry producers and all of our agricultural interests.

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are people on the North Shore and in all our regions who have worked their entire lives.

People like the retirees of Cliffs Natural Resources put their heart and soul, and their talents into their jobs and then were left high and dry because the company went bankrupt. When one has to choose between food or paying for chemotherapy or ostomy supplies, things are not good.

What is the minister waiting for to take action? How many shattered lives does he need to justify taking action?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, these types of particular instances that occur with job losses sometimes go before the courts under the CCAA, but more importantly, our government understands that we need to be there to help these citizens during these difficult times, help these workers, help the families, and help these different communities. We will remain engaged. We will work with the stakeholders and the communities to find solutions and a path forward to create more opportunities and more jobs.

* * *

BROADCASTING OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Forty years ago today, the “gavel-to-gavel” parliamentary proceedings of the House of Commons were broadcast live on television for the very first time.

[Translation]

This first televised broadcast launched the concept of television as an electronic *Hansard*. The success of the Canadian experience ultimately led other legislative bodies to allow the broadcasting of their work, based on the model proposed by the House of Commons.

[English]

We have come a long way since that first live television broadcast, and despite the rapidly advancing forms of social and digital communications reframing how we communicate with Canadians, broadcasting service continues to play a key role in keeping our fellow citizens informed about the business of Parliament, and even manage the sound quite well. For the past 25 years, the Cable Public Affairs Channel, or CPAC, has worked in partnership with us to ensure that Canadians have a front-row view into the very centre of our democracy.

[Translation]

We thank them.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, given the importance of the matter, allow me to remind you of some of the comments made yesterday in the House.

In response to an excellent question put by my colleague from Niagara West, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated, “...I did not say the words ascribed to me.”

I seek the unanimous consent of the House to table the transcript of the video in which the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs clearly states:

[*English*]

“Is there room to discuss and negotiate? Of course.”

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1505)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MINISTER OF FINANCE'S DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: There are three minutes remaining in questions and comments after the speech by the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard brought up, in reference to the Conservative motion today, that those living in glass houses should not be throwing rocks. I think about those living in glass houses in France, Barbados, the Bahamas, and on Bay Street. Maybe they should not be throwing rocks at people like the small business people in our country. I would like to hear from the member how he feels about the fact that perhaps those people living in glass houses should be looking at CEO stock-option loopholes, tax breaks for the wealthiest Canadians, and those who are using tax havens in our country.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is what is so hypocritical with the debate we are having today. The Liberals are trying to protect the Minister of Finance, who had an ethical lapse in not providing all the information regarding the property he owns through a private corporation, which includes a beautiful villa in France. As we know, most small businesses using private corporation structures are being attacked by the very same minister. The Liberals are calling them tax cheats. That type of rhetoric and demeanour and the way the Liberals are treating our small business community I heard about loud and clear this past week when we were in our ridings. In the round tables I participated in in Winnipeg, in Beausejour, and in Stonewall, our small business community is so upset they are not getting the respect they deserve. They are not getting the same types of opportunities to put their money into tax havens in Barbados or the Bahamas, as the Minister of Finance has done.

In the motion today, all we are calling for is more transparency. We are asking the minister to present all the documentation he has

Business of Supply

had between his office and the Ethics Commissioner, and also, if he has sold his shares, to disclose that to the House. The only way he could get around not having a blind trust is to have liquidated his assets.

As a farmer, who was a parliamentary secretary, I had to put my farm into a blind trust while I served as a public office holder. Why did the Minister of Finance not put his assets into a blind trust as well?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start with the basics. First, this is Canada. The people here in this House represent this country. We are a democracy, not a dictatorship. As Canadians, we are governed not only by laws, but also by a code of ethics. We parliamentarians are here to serve Canadians, and Canadians expect us to govern this country in an exemplary fashion.

As parliamentarians, we must be the first to honour the laws we pass. Any parliamentarian who fails to take seriously the laws we pass or the code of ethics we swear to abide by clearly does not understand our responsibilities or our mandate.

Second, Canada is a beacon to the world. This country may not be perfect, but it is the best in the world when it comes to natural beauty, the beauty and strength of its people, and good governance practices. Many people around the world dream of making Canada their home, and for good reason.

However, Canada and what it represents are a fragile thing. The things that make this country great did not come about by accident. It is no accident that there is peace in Canada and major tension in other countries. It is no accident that our country is stable while so many others are in dire straits. Our ancestors were not perfect, but I honour them because they laid a solid foundation upon which we today can build a future. If we wish to continue to prosper and to strengthen our stability, we must never forget what is important. As members of Parliament, we must never lose sight of our mandate, our responsibilities, and the laws that govern us.

Furthermore, when a member is appointed to cabinet, he or she is held to a higher standard when it comes to compliance with the law and our code of ethics. As the saying goes, to whom much is given, much is required. A minister of the Crown has access to a lot of privileged information and is granted many decision-making powers. These powers must be managed judiciously, taking into account the well-being of all Canadians. A minister cannot be negligent or selfish in the administration of his or her powers and office. There is too much at stake.

That being said, I would now like to give my personal opinion. We in the House are used to getting vague answers from the Liberal government. When the Liberals answer our questions, they use big words that mean nothing. We have seen a few examples of this recently. The Liberals are insulting our intelligence and that of Canadians. However, we would be naive to rely on their answers to get at the truth.

Business of Supply

We in the opposition are looking for the truth, but from different sources. We are not the only ones looking for the truth. Canada's business community, Canadians, the media, and even the Liberal backbenchers, those who are not listening to what I am saying right now, are looking for the truth about the Liberals' proposed tax reform.

Yesterday after the caucus meeting, some Liberal MPs came to us frustrated. They are still awaiting the details from their own Minister of Finance, perhaps because he himself is waiting for instructions from Gerald Butts. Where is Mr. Butts? The Minister of Finance would like to have a word with him.

This Liberal circus is laughable, but the Canadian economy is a very serious subject. We have reason to be concerned because the Liberals are doing an excellent job of misgoverning this country. Bravo!

Even the liberal media cannot ignore this parody of governance. Media coverage of this tax reform has Canadians worried. I can only hope that some of the reports are false. For example, some stories indicate that Morneau Shepell could benefit from the finance minister's tax changes. If that is true, the minister would be in a conflict of interest, and he should be looking for another job.

• (1510)

The Minister of Finance also failed to disclose a private corporation to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and he admitted that he failed to put more than \$30 million in Morneau Shepell shares in a blind trust. That is unbelievable. All members of the House, particularly cabinet members and even parliamentary secretaries, have a basic obligation to report absolutely everything. If we have \$10,000 in an RRSP, it has to be reported. If not, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner may send us a letter telling us that we are in trouble.

We are talking about \$30 million. That may not seem like a lot of money to the finance minister, but it is an enormous amount for Canadians watching at home.

[English]

Does the Minister of Finance believe he is entitled to his entitlements? Does he think it is not fair and not hard to make priorities?

[Translation]

Does the finance minister intend to tell Canadians about his tax reform and how it seems to benefit his companies and that of the Prime Minister himself? Canadians want to know the truth about this reform.

Canadian businesses and Canadians must know the truth. That is the only way they can know whether this government truly believes in job creators.

This reminds me of a famous quote from a former Liberal prime minister, who said: "I don't know. A proof is a proof. What kind of proof? It's a proof. A proof is a proof, and when you have a good proof, it's because it's proven." I did not make that up. It was said by a former Liberal prime minister who everyone remembers.

I hope the finance minister remembers the words he spoke at his swearing-in ceremony, and that the rest of us do too for that matter. Right now, I am not convinced that he does.

Why must Canadians always wait for answers to such easy questions? There could be no easier questions.

The sooner the finance minister gives the House the details regarding his investments, the sooner the Prime Minister will give him permission to speak to the public and the media.

• (1515)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I take great exception to the fact that the Conservatives have opposed everything the Minister of Finance has tried to do. They heckle "Hear, hear" across the benches.

I have seen the results of the actions of the Minister of Finance. We could talk about the historical number of jobs that have been created, 400,000-plus. We could talk about the issue of tax fairness for Canadians. We could talk about tax breaks for Canadians. Everything the Minister of Finance does, the Conservative Party does nothing but criticize.

Why should Canadians believe the Conservative Party on this issue when we have an independent commissioner responsible for ethics, who has indicated he has done nothing wrong, from what we can tell? The minister is prepared to even meet with the Ethics Commissioner.

Mr. Pat Kelly: The issue is conflict of interest. You're off topic.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that the question is being directed through me to another member, who actually has the floor as soon as I recognize him. I am sure he will answer accordingly.

[Translation]

The honourable member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I agree. The question must be directed through you to me. I am nonetheless happy that the parliamentary secretary is asking me a question, and I am trying to understand how he can believe what he is saying.

From the beginning, two years ago, I have had a great deal of respect for the finance minister. I think he is a very successful businessman, and he is stylish and kind. However, it is the minister's actions that are currently being judged. The minister and the individual are two different people. The Minister of Finance of Canada introduced tax reforms in the middle of the summer. Everyone stood up, not just members of the Conservative Party, everyone in Canada. Canadian entrepreneurs stood up and said that these measures would not work, that they went against their interests, and that the reform made no sense.

Then we heard that there were some ethical issues. We all know that ethics are the cornerstone of our work and, as I said in my speech, Canadians rely on us. We have here a minister who failed to report \$30 million in assets and maybe more. Do not try to tell me that that is okay.

Business of Supply

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his contribution to this debate.

I am wondering what he thought about the answers we have been given so far regarding the information that has come to light, namely, that the minister may not have placed his assets in a blind trust, even though everyone, even the Liberals, seemed to think that he had. It was understood that the minister had done that. The answer we have been getting from the minister and other Liberal members is that the minister is prepared to work with the commissioner, that he is prepared to meet with her, and that he even sent her a letter today about meeting with her.

Does my colleague not think that it is a bit late to be dealing with the situation now, and that the minister should have put his affairs in order much sooner?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, that is a good question.

We get a letter from the commissioner's office every year. Since I first got here, I have received a letter or email every year without fail, asking me whether there are any changes to report in my situation. I look at the letter and realize that I cashed in my RRSPs, so I have to report it.

The minister must have received the same letter every year. We have been here for two years. Even if the minister forgot to report \$30 million dollars in the first year, he could have thought about it later. I think that he could have thought about the fact that he had \$30 million and a villa in France and that he should report it. However, he did not.

Was it intentional? Was it a mistake? When you have too much money, it may be possible to forget about some of it. However, I believe that he had enough people working for him, including about 100 accountants, to remind him, so I think he should have been able to report these things.

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, where to start in trying to deal with what the Conservative Party is sharing with us this afternoon. Maybe I will start by responding to the concluding words of my colleague across the aisle, who said that the villa should have been declared. My recollection is that it was reported in November 2015. The *Financial Post* mentioned the fact that the Minister of Finance had a villa in France. Does that mean opposition members or their research department are not even aware of this?

This is why I bring it up. We really cannot trust the Conservative Party on this issue. Some might suggest any issue, but I will be a bit more generous to my friends across the way. This is one of the issues on which we really cannot trust the Conservative Party.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Kevin, this is humiliating. Just stop.

Mr. Phil McColeman: That's pathetic.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, each and every one of us, including myself, is responsible to the Ethics Commissioner, even the member across the aisle who yelled "pathetic". Even that member has an obligation to the Ethics Commissioner. All those

members, including the Minister of Finance, have an obligation. All means all inclusive. We all had to submit requirements. We all consult with the commissioner's office. The commissioner's office provides us with the information we need to know in order to be, and appear to be, transparent and accountable to the constituents we represent or to Canadians as a whole. The minister—

Mr. Phil McColeman: The finance minister is exempt.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members on the Conservative side that they were afforded the opportunity of not to being heckled by members on the other side when they were giving their speeches. I would ask that they refrain from heckling to allow the parliamentary secretary to give his speech. If members on that side have questions, I will be glad to entertain them right after his speech.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when the Ethics Commissioner's office contacts myself, I respond. I suspect members on both sides of the House will respond, whether he or she is a New Democrat, a Conservative or a Liberal, where follow up takes place with individual members because the commissioner's office may have some concerns. That is no different than what the Minister of Finance has done.

The Minister of Finance has made it very clear. He has said that he will meet with the Ethics Commissioner and will seek her advice and recommendations, and act accordingly. That is the responsible thing to do, and what each and every one of us are obligated to do.

As some of my colleagues say, what we have today is an effort from the official opposition, joined by the New Democrats, to go on some sort of a witch hunt or character assassination. Let us go into the details of that.

Why should Canadians, or anyone who is listening, believe the Conservatives or the New Democrats who at every opportunity they get attack the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, and others within this government? One might argue that they are the opposition and that is their job. Yes, there is a great deal of merit for that argument. Having said that, it is every initiative.

I want to remind the viewers and the members opposite to degree they have been critical of this government and, in particular, of the Minister of Finance. People should ask themselves why they should believe in and take the advice of the Conservatives when they have been critical of the Minister of Finance since day one.

We would be ill-advised to take advice from the Conservatives on this and many other issues in which they have demonstrated they have a natural, instinctive bias to attack. That is demonstrated in their actions. I believe Canadians understand and appreciate what this government has been able to accomplish in a relatively short period of time through the actions of the Minister of Finance.

Again, I highlight, as I go through each one of these initiatives, that we will find the Conservative Party attacking the Minister of Finance, with no exceptions.

Business of Supply

The most recent one is the tax fairness policy. Day in and day out, the Conservative Party fights against tax fairness. The Minister of Finance led the debate among Canadians, which started, in a big way, back the month of July, when a presentation was made.

It is interesting as there seems to be a bit of a divide between the New Democrats and the Conservatives on this. I do not hear members of the NDP criticizing many aspects of the tax fairness policy. I give them credit for recognizing the fact that the issue is tax fairness.

On the other hand, the Conservatives yell and scream that this is an attack on business and middle class. Nothing could be further from the truth with respect to the whole tax initiative. It has been that way since the month of July. It all about tax fairness. People would not know if they listened to the opposition party, as they take the extreme position and try to use it as a wedge issue. In fact, the government has been very supportive. I use small business as an example.

● (1525)

How often do we hear Conservative members saying that the Liberals are attacking small businesses, or the government is attacking small businesses? I would suggest that they wake up and understand reality.

It was only yesterday that we as a government fulfilled a campaign platform promise. We actually made a commitment to reduce the small business tax rate from 10.5% to 9%. That is something we promised, and that is something we fulfilled. It was announced yesterday.

That is not the first time we have been there to help small business. I talk to small businesses. If members talk to small businesses, what they will find out is that the primary thing every small business wants is customers. If they have customers, they have opportunities.

Mr. John Brassard: You've got to be in business to have customers.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: You have to have customers in order to be in business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that there cannot be any discussion back and forth. Address the comments to the Chair. I will remind the member for Barrie—Innisfil to please hold his comments. I am sure that I would be pleased to recognize him during the question and comment section.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, along the line of supporting small businesses and how to create customers, the best way to do that is to put more disposable income in the pockets of Canada's middle class. It is the middle class that drives our economy. That is what creates the jobs, the middle class.

If we address the importance of Canada's middle class and those striving to be a part of it, we will have a more successful, robust economy. In 18 months we have been able to clearly demonstrate that. Let us look at some of the numbers. I am big on trends, and I am very impressed by the job creation numbers, with over 400,000 jobs created in less than two years. That is more jobs than the Harper

government was able to create over 10 years. The plan is in fact working.

This is the point in regard to small business, that we gave the tax break to Canada's middle class. We actually reduced the taxes of Canada's middle class. What was the response of the Conservative Party? It voted against it, but it was that the tax cut that put money in the pockets of—

● (1530)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am just wondering if the jobs numbers were in any of the documents the minister provided the Ethics Commissioner, because—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order. Comments and questions come afterwards. Maybe the member would like to get up. As the member is well aware, during debate there is some flexibility. As to the discussion, I will remind the member that he is to keep his comments on the motion itself. I also recognize that there is some flexibility in the discussion at hand.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to appease my colleague across the way from Elmwood—Transcona, who maybe was not paying attention to my whole presentation, I have consistently said that the opposition, including in good part the NDP, have consistently opposed the Minister of Finance in every way, just like the motion today does. The NDP members are working with the Conservatives, even though the Ethics Commissioner has said that nothing has gone wrong. The Ethics Commissioner has not sent advice or a recommendation to the Minister of Finance, who has done exactly what the member across the way has done.

We enhanced business through a tax break for the middle class and both the Conservatives and the NDP voted against that. We know there have been many other initiatives. The opposition parties jointly voted against the Minister of Finance when it came to the tax increase on Canada's wealthiest. I would argue that it was about tax fairness, but they chose to oppose the government.

There have been a number of initiatives by the government that have been led by the Minister of Finance. Look at the Canada pension plan. The Minister of Finance worked with federal counterparts across every province and territory on a very important deal. One of my colleagues referred to how the Minister of Finance was working with other ministers. It was the finance minister from Saskatchewan who commented on the integrity of the national Minister of Finance. He said it was nice to see Minister of Finance follow through on the things he said, and there is a tremendous amount of respect for him, which ultimately resulted in an enhancement of the CPP, something that the Harper government was unable to achieve, let alone have an interest in. It ensures that Canadians will have more money in their pockets when it comes time to retire in the years ahead. What was the response by the opposition parties? They called it another tax and then went on to attack the Minister of Finance once again, even though other political parties at the provincial level did not see it as a tax. They see it as an investment for retirement for Canadians in the future, but not the Conservative Party here. They are so fixated and wanting to attack the Minister of Finance that they have focused their attention day in and day out criticizing the minister because of this so-called tax, which was not really a tax.

Business of Supply

We can talk about the guaranteed income supplement, which I thought was long overdue. The former government ignored that file and we now have a new government with the Minister of Finance who wants to get more seniors out of poverty. That is what the increase to the GIS was all about. In good part, it was a huge success. Once again, the Conservative Party—

● (1535)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I am coming back to relevance. Today's motion is focusing on the minister and his ethics, not on the guaranteed income supplement or the Canada pension plan. I recognize that we have flexibility here, including on the part of the Chair, but the member is so far away from this discussion, I hope that he can get back on track very soon.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have indicated before that there is some latitude in the speeches. However, I will remind the member to maybe review the opposition motion, and I am sure that he will bring his speech back to that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to the member across the way, hopefully this will help, and I say this with all sincerity. If the member reads the motion, the motion itself is an attack on the Minister of Finance. You are asking that the Minister of Finance to provide documents that you are not asking of any other—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member to address the questions and comments to the chair as opposed to individual members.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party is asking the Minister of Finance to produce documents and do things that no other member of the House is requested to do.

If members listen to what is being said, they will find that I am arguing that every time the Conservatives get an opportunity to attack the Minister of Finance, they do so. These are the examples I am providing. These members might not like to be reminded of their attitude and voting records on something that is really important to all Canadians, but it is worth noting that, much like the motion we are debating today, the Conservatives continue to want to attack the Minister of Finance.

I then contrasted and put the question to viewers or anyone who might be listening, in particular, my Conservative colleagues across the way, that the Conservatives are not the body, thank goodness, that determines what is ethical or not. We have an independent officer of Parliament to determine that. In this case, it is the Ethics Commissioner, and the Ethics Commissioner is someone we continue to work with.

However, it is interesting how the Conservatives try to give the impression that the Ethics Commissioner is super busy. I would argue that the Ethics Commissioner has always been busy. When I was in opposition, there was no shortage of issues that we encouraged the Ethics Commissioner to look at. I believe members will find that the Ethics Commissioner looks at not just one side of the House but all sides of the House.

We have a Conservative opposition that wants to try to give the impression that the Minister of Finance is in fact breaking a law or doing something that is against our code of ethics. In fact, the Conservatives have not tabled or brought forward anything that gives any clear indication that this is in fact the case. Therefore, I ask: Why would we listen to the Conservative rhetoric on the issue when we have an Ethics Commissioner who is charged with that responsibility?

I believe Canadians will look to the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, because it is independent. I do not have to expand on why that office is independent, but it is much like the independent Commissioner of Elections Canada. We also have an independent auditor general. We have these independent officers of Parliament. This is their job.

Not one Conservative can stand and point to a recommendation from the Ethics Commissioner that the Minister of Finance, or any other member, whether Conservative or NDP, is in violation of the Conflict of Interest Act and conflict of interest code, or is not following the advice or recommendation of the Ethics Commissioner. Instead, they are just denigrating, as they have consistently done in response to a number of points I have raised this afternoon, the Minister of Finance and the fine work he has been doing on behalf of the Government of Canada.

When we look at the results, they are very clear. I will use the simple example of jobs, because jobs matter. There were 400,000-plus jobs created in less than two years.

● (1540)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to hear my friend from Winnipeg North speak in the House. I invite Canadians to check out an amazing website called openparliament.ca, because they can see what MPs have said throughout the course of their parliamentary lives. For someone as verbose as my friend, it is a treasure trove for people like me to see if he is consistent in his views in this Parliament.

On May 21, 2013, the member for Winnipeg North called for an emergency debate in the House of Commons related to ethics and disclosure and conduct at the time. The irony is that at that time, the emergency debate the member was requesting dealt with staff members in the Prime Minister's Office, not members of Parliament and not finance ministers, which is what this opposition day motion is about today. He wanted an emergency debate in the House of Commons about the conduct of staff. He ended his request by saying, "There can be no more important issue for the House of Commons than ensuring the integrity of our parliamentary institutions."

That is what this debate today is doing. He should be applauding, not deferring this debate. I would invite members from his riding to check out the consistency of that member. The outrage he showed in the past seems to dissipate now, with the actions of the Liberal government.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member across the way would bring that up as an example. It was a truly amazing occurrence that was taking place in the other chamber, in the Senate. We had thousands of dollars being shifted around by staff in the PMO and the Senate. What an amazing web it was. Even the prime minister, Stephen Harper, tried to get some distance from that disaster. That is like night and day in terms of a comparison.

I have a lot of respect for my colleague across the way. I really do. I thought he would have done better on a question. It just does not give me enough time to revisit Harper-gate, or whatever it is they might want to call it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1545)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the members that there should not be any heckling while another member is speaking.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating to watch the Liberals' and the Conservatives' mutual finger-pointing as they try to sort out which party is the worst offender when it comes to ethics and integrity. The Conservatives say they are not as bad as the Liberals, while the Liberals say the opposite and claim superiority in terms of integrity, but as the NDP sees it, each is as bad as the other.

I have a very simple question. My colleague repeatedly called the motion an attack against the Minister of Finance. I invite him to reread the motion, which simply states that there may be a conflict of interest between the finance minister's assets and his proposed legislation. At the end of the motion, the mover asks that the Minister of Finance table all documents related to his declaration to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I do not understand why my colleague sees that as an attack. I think this is simply asking the Minister of Finance to lay all his cards on the table so everyone is aware of his affairs and can see whether or not there is a conflict of interest. This is just about bringing all of the information to light. It is simply a request that the Minister of Finance be transparent and clear the air. Why does my colleague interpret it as an attack?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what is next? Are we going to have a motion that everyone, all 338 MPs, should submit to the House of Commons and table all the correspondence they have shared with the commissioner? Is that what the member is implying should happen? Do they remember what happened when we had proactive disclosure? The NDP had to be kicked, dragging and screaming, to accept proactive disclosure.

They talk about throwing stones in glass houses. One of my colleagues made a reference to that. They will recall the satellite scandal, when the New Democrats created offices and said they had people working here, here, and here. They were not telling the truth. It cost taxpayers millions of dollars. I think we are still trying to recover some of that money from the NDP.

In fairness, there is always room for improvement on all sides of this House in all political parties.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad we are back on the actual motion. I was happy to send the motion over to the member just to remind him what we were talking about today.

I am going to be focusing on this, because we are talking about finance and money. Let us say that the member is an owner of a pharmaceutical company. Should he not, if he is a health minister, advise that he is the minister of health and owns a pharmaceutical company? Let us say that he is a member of the board at a military equipment company. As the procurement minister, should he not make sure that there is not a conflict of interest? Should he not make sure that there is a screen?

Rather than thinking that this is a personal attack on the Minister of Finance, think of any other situation where a minister's department and what they do are so hand in hand. Does he not think the Minister of Finance should have declared his business in a blind trust?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I sat in opposition when the Harper government decided to kill the Canadian wheat board. I wonder how many farmers from the Prairies were in the government caucus. Many would imply that they had a vested interest. After all, many of them were grain farmers, yet they were killing the Canadian wheat board. We are still paying part of the cost for that issue today.

We have a system in place, a process. It says that if people are elected, they go before the commissioner's office, or the commissioner's office contacts them, and there are certain requirements. A person must fulfill those requirements. There is a certain amount of trust that all members are honourable members. When we are asked for information, we provide that information. There might be a mistake or two when there are 338 members, but we all have to respect the process and go through it.

I believe that the Minister of Finance and all members of this House have respected that process and have gone through it. There might be the odd mistake, whether it is a New Democrat, a Conservative, or a Liberal. It is possible, but I believe that the intent of all members is genuine in dealing with the commissioner's office.

• (1550)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, part of the crux of the issue and the reason the finance minister was singled out is that Canadians were led to believe that he was acting in accordance with the recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner. What we found out in testimony at committee today was that, in fact, that was not the case. The Ethics Commissioner said clearly at committee today that she did not advise the finance minister not to put his assets in a blind trust.

We know also that in two instances, Bill C-27 and the small business tax proposals, there are legitimate concerns about the fact that those proposals could directly have an impact on the business of the finance minister, which we now know is not in a blind trust. He has knowledge of what is going on in his own business.

Business of Supply

That is why this is about the finance minister. That is different from any other member of the House. There are not stories like that about any other member of the House. They are not in a position to benefit their own businesses in the way we are concerned the finance minister may be.

I wonder why the member for Winnipeg North is more concerned about defending the finance minister's precarious position than he is about making sure that the business of government is being conducted fairly and in a way that meets a very high ethical standard. There are clearly legitimate questions about whether the finance minister is meeting that standard.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is somewhat playing with words. Think about the question he posed. He said that the commissioner did not say that she did not advise him to set up a blind trust. The point is that she did not recommend or advise him to establish a blind trust. Imagine if we were to apply that very same principle to each of the 338 MPs.

The Ethics Commissioner was doing her job. She did not say to the Minister of Finance that he had to create a blind trust. Why try to give that impression? That is what the NDP and the Conservatives are trying to do. That is why I am saying not to trust the opposition on this issue. I will trust Mary Dawson, the Ethics Commissioner, because that is what she does, and she is independent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Winnipeg-North for having such a selective memory, but I hope he remembers what he said over the last few years when he sat in opposition. I will share my time with my colleague from Barrie-Innisfil, in Ontario.

Before going into politics, I worked for a long time in the business world and, naturally, I met many businessmen and women. I have a huge respect for entrepreneurs and SMEs. I acknowledge their work and contribution. Working in business means not counting the hours. When someone chooses to start a business, that normally means dedicating themselves to it heart and soul. There is no 9 to 5 for them, nor happy hours, since they have to work practically 24/7. They have to wait at least five years before even thinking of planning a vacation, and if they take time off, they have to pay the price, before and after.

Now let us talk about the risks. Investments have to be made, and there are no guarantees. Entrepreneurs are diving in head first, investing in their business. At the beginning of every month, they have to start over, get more orders, pay their employees, pay back their loans, and remit payroll deductions. Before they know it, their monthly expenses are due again, so they have to create wealth.

They also need to become financially independent in order to get through difficult times. Unfortunately, when a person starts a business, there are difficult times. They often occur unexpectedly, so business owners need to have a contingency fund. That is an enormous sacrifice for families. It is a choice, and, if these entrepreneurs do manage to create prosperity, they can enjoy it, but there are no guarantees.

Many Canadians dream of being their own boss, creating something that will grow and that can be passed on to their children

and grandchildren. A responsible government needs to create winning conditions for these entrepreneurs to achieve their goals and feel good about their accomplishments. That is what economic development is all about. It creates jobs. Many of the jobs out there are held by the middle class. We must not forget that 90% of all jobs in Canada are created by SMEs.

Our country is the greatest country in the world, largely because of our robust economy. We spent 10 years in power building a solid economy, and now the government is destroying any optimism and passion our entrepreneurs might have had. Whether they are creating or managing SMEs or working for themselves, these people are an important part of our economy.

I entered politics for a number of reasons. First, I wanted to represent the citizens of the beautiful riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, but it was also because I firmly believe that we need to implement measures to support our entrepreneurs. There are many industrial parks in Canada's 338 ridings. They drive the economies of many of our regions, and it is important that we support them.

As I was saying, more than 90% of jobs in Canada are created by SMEs. We need to motivate them to continue to prosper. It makes some people uneasy when we say a business is prospering, but there is no crime in prospering. On the contrary, when businesses prosper, they continue to do business and grow. That is what provides momentum for the economy and makes it possible to improve the lives of middle-class workers.

We are well aware that the Liberal government is unabashedly spending Canadians' tax dollars while continually asking them to tighten their belts. This same Liberal government, in its 2016 budget, could not wait to eliminate the tax breaks implemented by Mr. Harper's government to help Canadian families.

● (1555)

In 2015, this same government promised to lower the tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses. What has it done since taking office? It nixed this policy because it came from the Conservatives. Just yesterday, as a result of representations from the Conservative opposition and action by thousands of entrepreneurs in Canada, the Prime Minister, with his lapdog the Minister of Finance, hastily, but somewhat reluctantly, said that he was going to lower taxes for SMEs. He did this to buy the silence of SMEs, but that change will take effect not in 2017 or 2018, but in 2019, an election year. What does he take entrepreneurs for? This is all just smoke and mirrors. He is making things up as he goes along.

What led the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister to change their plan was the tax reform. When will it be put in place? When will it be applied? They did not cancel the reform yesterday. They handed out a goody, but the tax reform is still happening. The Liberals do not respect SMEs. Once again, it is all just smoke and mirrors.

Business of Supply

Meanwhile, the Minister of Finance is strutting about developing business for Morneau Shepell. I do not know if everyone knows about the company. It is the company he owned. We do not know either whether he has sold his shares. We asked today during question period, but we have not yet had a response. He probably did not understand the question. That is why the parliamentary secretary parroted the same talking points that did not answer the question.

This minister said he was above the law. We learned last week that the Minister of Finance had waited two years before informing the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner that he was a partner in a company that owns and manages a villa in France. We are learning now that not only is this Liberal government spending taxpayers' money shamelessly, but that the Minister of Finance's family business, Morneau Shepell, would also benefit from changes proposed in the document entitled *Tax Planning Using Private Corporations*. I am not the one saying this; experts have said this. It will lend more credibility. I am a parliamentarian, not an economist.

The Minister of Finance should not avoid questions in the House. He must answer without always repeating the same talking points. He must not scorn the middle class and SMEs that create jobs. He must provide honest answers to the questions asked by all parliamentarians.

Once elected and sworn in, members are required to observe certain rules of conduct in performing their parliamentary duties. I will quote a few paragraphs from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which describes the responsibilities and conduct of MPs:

Members sit in the House of Commons to serve as representatives of the people who have elected them to that office. They have wide-ranging responsibilities which include work in the Chamber, committees, their constituencies and political parties.

On being elected, Members of the House of Commons become trustees of public confidence. Members must place the public's interests over their private interests and [I stress this section] derive no personal benefit or gain from their decisions. [They must be impartial].

The same source states:

In addition to statutory prohibitions, Prime Ministers have issued conflict of interest guidelines for Ministers and other public office holders...The code is voluntary and applies to Cabinet Ministers, Secretaries of State, Parliamentary Secretaries and other senior public office holders (full-time Governor in Council appointees). It requires that, on appointment to one of these offices, the office holders are to arrange their private affairs so as to prevent real, potential or apparent conflicts from arising. They are not to solicit or accept money or gifts; not to assist individuals in their dealings with government in such a way as to compromise their own professional status; not to take advantage of information obtained because of their positions as insiders....

• (1600)

I have other things to say, but I simply wanted to ask the Minister of Finance to table these documents, as requested in the motion.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks.

Although all 338 members are subject to the Conflict of Interest Code, does my colleague feel that it is important for ministers, who sit on the front benches across the way and who hold important public offices, should be subject to the higher standards set out in the Conflict of Interest Act?

How serious is it for a minister to contravene the law, as the Minister of Finance seems to have done?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. It is a very relevant question. It is unfortunate that the government across the way trivializes it.

I do not want to belittle the work of a member, but the minister is not just a member. Of 338 members, some are called to serve the public in a more active way and have more authority. The finance minister must respect the law and be beyond reproach.

It bothers me to see the government across the way try to defend the indefensible. The Government's attitude, trivializing this situation, is unacceptable. The rules apply to everyone and the Minister of Finance must be beyond reproach. What is dangerous, in his case, is that he can personally benefit from his decisions. That is what experts are trying more and more to show us, and I think that the truth is starting to come out.

• (1605)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a fairly straightforward question regarding the Ethics Commissioner, who has the responsibility not of just one member but of all members of all political parties. I wonder if the member has any thoughts in terms of how important it is, as we go through the process, to respect the advice that she provides. It is something that the Minister of Finance has sought from the Ethics Commissioner. Does the member not believe that we should be following the process?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that it is very important to follow the rules from the commissioner.

After two years, the Minister of Finance cannot claim that the commissioner did not properly assist him in completing his forms. I hope that the finance minister, the master of finances in Canada, is intelligent enough to complete his forms without needing help from the commissioner.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for splitting his time with me today.

Let me begin. If I did not know any better, I would think today is February 2, Groundhog Day, because here we are dealing with another issue of Liberal ethics. Last time, it involved the Prime Minister and his trip to billionaire island. We still have not had the result of that ethical investigation by the Ethics Commissioner. This time we are dealing with the finance minister. I will get into why we are here in a second.

One of the benefits of being on House duty on a long day like Tuesday is that we get to hear the debate and the dissertations of many members. I just happened to sit through the one by the member for Winnipeg North, who claimed that this was in fact a character assassination of the finance minister. That always seems to be the answer from the Liberals any time legitimate questions come up with respect to ethics, legislation, regulation, or policy: it is always an attack on them.

Business of Supply

Nothing could be further from the truth in this situation. In fact, it is the Prime Minister who put himself in the position by going to billionaire island and causing, if not ethical lapses to occur, illegal activity to occur. It is now the finance minister who has put himself in this situation.

I will remind this House why we are in this position. Just this past week, *The Globe and Mail* reported that for two years the finance minister has not put his assets, including the shares he owns in Morneau Shepell, into a blind trust. This is in spite of the fact that two years ago he said he was going to do that.

The other reason we are here is that, within the past week, CBC reported that the finance minister and his wife, a member of the McCain family—and I will touch on that a little later—have a corporation that owns a French villa, which could in fact be used to avoid inheritance tax. Over the course of the past several months, we have been dealing with this business tax proposal that would tax businesses, would create challenges for those businesses, including farms, that would want to pass those businesses on; and yet here is the finance minister owning a corporation of a French villa with the potential of avoiding inheritance taxes.

Two years ago, when the finance minister was asked about this situation, he said he expected to put those assets into a blind trust, not unlike what former prime minister and finance minister Paul Martin did when he owned Canada Steamship Lines.

The finance minister blamed this on an early administrative failure, this in spite of the fact that, by her own admission today at committee, Ethics Commissioner Dawson did speak to the finance minister. I think it is important, again, to understand what she said. She did advise him otherwise, but it was still his decision to not put those assets in a blind trust.

It was not until the CBC story broke about the French villa on September 25 that the minister did make a claim that he did own the French villa and a company associated with it.

Those are the facts. This is not an attempt by the opposition at character assassination, in spite of the narrative of the members on the other side, as we heard from the member for Winnipeg North, but this is an issue about transparency and about accountability, all of those things that we hold dear, not just in this House but also as Canadians.

When I became a member of Parliament, I had to declare all my assets, with thoroughness, including RESPs that I had for my children and RRSPs that my wife and I owned. I actually had to talk about and declare my wife's pension and everything but the tool shed in my backyard, notwithstanding the fact that it was not a French villa but a tool shed.

● (1610)

As members of Parliament, we know what it is we have to declare, so there was no early administrative failure on my part, and I suspect there was no early administrative failure on the part of most other members of Parliament in declaring their assets, except of course what we have learned about the finance minister.

The assets and the declaration of those assets are important—in particular, putting assets into a blind trust, like shares one owns in a

company like Morneau Shepell—because the finance minister is held to a higher standard. Ministers of the crown are held to a higher standard. Every single decision made and every stroke of a pen in making those decisions could in fact benefit them. Therefore, as ministers, they are intended to be held to a higher account. That is why the declaration and the holding in blind trust are extremely important.

Let us look at the policies. I brought up the French villa before. He talked about the fact that he owns this company there. That could potentially be used to avoid some inheritance tax, perhaps the very inheritance tax that could be affected by some of the tax policies he announced back in July. There are other issues, like the passing on of family farms to heirs. I had a farmer in my riding come to me quite upset about this because they had set up their entire affairs in order to pass the farm on to their children. He told me it would actually be more reasonable to sell it to an outside entity than it would be to sell it within his family. That calls into question why the finance minister would be changing the rules on those family farms. Maybe it is to benefit someone he is married to, like the McCains. Those are the kinds of things the finance minister has to be mindful of when he still holds on to these assets.

How could this have an effect? As I said earlier, it calls into question every decision the finance minister would make with respect to how these tax changes would benefit him. How could it benefit him and his family, in particular his wife, who as I said earlier, is a member of the McCain family?

The big question is the tax on business. We have seen the proposal of the tax on business. Granted, the Liberals climbed down a little yesterday. I would say it was more political backlash than anything else. With respect to the tax on pensions, which for example could affect those in the private sector, those in incorporated businesses, the beneficiary of that could be Morneau Shepell, as we heard all morning during this debate and throughout the afternoon. That calls into question the integrity of some of the decisions the finance minister has been making.

The tax on passive income and retained earnings could also be affected by this, as well as the tax on succession planning, passing those businesses on to other family members—for example, farms.

The one thing that has not been talked about today—and again it directly relates to the finance minister's interests in Morneau Shepell and not holding those assets in a blind trust—could be the infrastructure bank. How many of the companies that are going to invest in the infrastructure bank have direct dealings with Morneau Shepell, and how much of an impact would that have on the finance minister's wealth?

Just this afternoon, David Akin of Global TV tweeted that, if the finance minister still holds 2.5 million shares in Morneau Shepell, he has been getting a dividend cheque about once a month worth \$146,000-plus. Every decision the finance minister makes could potentially impact the assets he continues to own in Morneau Shepell and could continue to affect the income he creates on a monthly basis, based on those dividend cheques.

Business of Supply

The finance minister should have known better. He should have put the money into a blind trust. He should have disclosed the French villa. We are asking him to disclose all those documents from November 2015 to now. That is what the motion is all about.

• (1615)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if I could ask my colleague from across the way what he feels about the issue of farmers. When Stephen Harper was the prime minister, there was a great debate at the time in terms of what was happening with the Canadian Wheat Board and the impact that was having on farmers. Many of those farmers on whom it was having an impact sat on the Conservative benches. They were part of the government.

The member across the way is trying to imply that our Prime Minister, our Minister of Finance, or even government members in general benefit from decisions that are made by the government. All of us have some sort of a vested interest in the communities in which we live. Were the Conservative members, back when the Conservatives killed the Canadian Wheat Board, in an awkward position? What should they have done?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, yes, every member of this Parliament has a vested interest in some way, shape, or form, in something. However, we disclose every aspect of what we own, every asset we have, when we become members of Parliament. In fact, the law requires that we do that within 60 days. The Minister of Finance has not done that in two situations: with respect to the corporation by which he owns that French villa, and the millions of shares that he still owns in Morneau Shepell.

I am not trying to be cynical, but the question is this. How are the decisions he makes going to impact the wealth he has created in Morneau Shepell? Should the shares not be put in a blind trust, as former prime minister Paul Martin did with Canada Steamship Lines? Would that not be the way to solve this issue?

On the issue of the grain farmers, I was not here when that was happening, but I have spoken to farmers across western Canada, and the grain industry has exploded as a result of that decision.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up with my hon. colleague, because I have a fundamental question for him and a fundamental problem with the premise that, if the finance minister puts his shares into a blind trust, all will be well. I think we are way beyond that.

In 2013, the finance minister gave a speech in which he talked about the need to bring legislation into Canada to move people away from defined pension benefits. He talked about how his company, Morneau Shepell, was in the front row of making these changes around the world. Then he offered himself for public service, and he was put in the finance minister position, and the legislation was brought in to help make it easier to take away defined pension benefits. Therefore, the fact that he did not put his shares into a blind trust but said that legislation was needed to benefit his company and brought forward that legislation, to me speaks to a much more serious issue, which is a question of integrity with respect to the government and using people's pension funds to benefit the finance

minister and his pals at Morneau Shepell. I would like to ask my hon. colleague to comment on this.

• (1620)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I think my hon. friend is quite right in calling into question the effect this is going to have on Morneau Shepell with respect to defined benefits. We do not have to look too far back to Bill C-27, which was an amendment to the Pension Benefits Standards Act, which in fact was sponsored by the Minister of Finance and could potentially affect Morneau Shepell. As long as he continues to hold onto those shares, as long as he continues to get, as David Akin reported today, \$146,000 a month in dividends based on the 2.5 million shares he has, I think we are quite right to call into question every single decision the finance minister makes for the benefit of not just Morneau Shepell but the potential benefit of an increase in those dividends and what he can gain from this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to mention that I will share my speaking time with my distinguished and respected colleague from Timmins—James Bay, who will also certainly have much to say on the matter.

Like me, he has been on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. I had the opportunity and honour of serving as chair of that committee when my colleague was an active member on matters of ethics. I can therefore testify to his work and to the work that we did on that committee regarding matters of ethics.

The ethics and integrity of elected officials in our country, the elected officials of this institution, the House of Commons, are a fundamental issue, particularly regarding people who are chosen by the Prime Minister to hold important positions within the government, within the executive, where important decisions are made, as they have repercussions on all of Canadian society. Whether it be the Minister of National Revenue, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National Defence, the Prime Minister of course, or the Minister of Health, these people make decisions on a daily basis that affect our society. The finance minister makes decisions that are directly related to the financial sector in this country, and sometimes even decisions related to the management of pensions in Canada.

That brings me to the problem raised by many of my colleagues today, the potential conflict of interest that we obviously see with the finance minister's company, which is the subject of the motion being debated today. It is related to statements that he made to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I have a lot of respect for her. I have had the chance to meet with her and to cross paths with her in the committee I chaired. She came several times to answer questions from parliamentarians regarding ethics and the code that could be modernized; not only the code, in fact, but also the law that applies to public office holders. It is very important to distinguish between the code and the law.

There is a reason we decided to have higher standards for public office holders. Indeed, they make decisions that directly affect our society and our laws. So it is perfectly normal for them to have higher standards regarding ethics and conduct.

Business of Supply

The finance minister was questioned. He is the subject of this motion, because his company has direct interests in decisions that the minister makes on a daily basis. That is the big issue today, and it presents a major problem. Whether we talk about tax changes for small and medium enterprises and rules regarding estates, passive assets in companies or income distribution, they are all changes that could potentially have an impact on the minister's own company. Moreover, it can even give the impression that he intentionally avoided affecting his own company and his own assets in the legislative amendments that he published, that he proposed, in a document last July. We are still waiting for definitive answers. Clearly, Canadians and parliamentarians are questioning the finance minister's real motivations in these matters, and his real intentions behind those changes.

The same goes when we talk about changes to pension plans, as my colleague just mentioned, and the possibility that this is the end of defined benefits pensions. The Minister of Finance has a direct interest in the new pension formula proposed in the framework of this bill, a formula that might be used by private companies across the country. One of the key players in this field, an entity that is prepared to promote such a pension plan, is the Minister of Finance's company.

Of course in this matter as well we question the minister's real interests and true intentions when he sponsors a bill that can have an impact on his own company and his own interests.

• (1625)

I say his own company because we are still not sure who Morneau Shepell belongs to. Obviously, the company bears his name, which is one indication, but questions remain on the identity of the real shareholders of this company because the minister has not shed light on the matter so far. Hence the motion calling on him to table all documents that could shed light on this. He failed to declare all of his interests in this company. He still has not said whether he put his assets in a blind trust, which is another fundamental question.

In Quebec, we might be more attuned to this issue because of our experience with a former political party leader at the National Assembly who also had significant interests in a private company and who could have influenced policy decisions having an impact on his company. Putting assets in a blind trust is the least someone can do to be free of any perceived conflict of interest.

Even if his assets had been placed in a blind trust, the fact remains that the minister will take back the company's reins once he leaves public life, which should be sooner rather than later, in our minds. That raises the question, then, about whether this is the best solution. In my opinion, it is the minimum, but so far, the minister has not confirmed that information.

Although the Liberals thought that the minister had placed his assets in a blind trust, whether he did or not is less clear today. Confusion reigns regarding what is really going on with his business and how much control he has in it.

The whole debate around this matter makes us wonder whether the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister understand what the middle class is. Do they really understand when they talk about taxation and small and medium-sized businesses?

When we hear the Prime Minister say during the election campaign that most small businesses are merely numbered companies used to avoid paying taxes, we have to wonder whether the Liberals really understand the reality facing small and medium-sized businesses and the middle class, even though they pride themselves on being their greatest champions. Do they really understand?

Madam Speaker, when you declare your assets under the conflict of interest code, do you forget a property? Do you forget about some cottage you own somewhere in Canada? Do you forget to mention a chalet in Switzerland? I doubt it. I doubt that most Canadians would forget about their villa in France. I have to question the sincerity of the Minister of Finance when he claims to be the champion of the middle class. He says he wants to protect small and medium-sized businesses at all cost, but he appears to be doing the opposite. This whole debate forces us to question his sincerity, the Prime Minister's sincerity, and what their private holdings actually are.

This is one more example of how far removed policy makers are from regular Canadians. If there is one thing a finance minister can do to alleviate public cynicism towards politicians, it is to fully disclose all of his private holdings. Unfortunately, the Minister of Finance's conduct only feeds this cynicism towards politicians who refuse to obey the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and disclose their information and interests.

• (1630)

It is high time that the Liberals accepted the motion before us today, to finally let the daylight in and dispel any and all doubts as to the true interests of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things we have heard all day today is that this is character assassination of the finance minister.

Does the member not agree that this was actually the finance minister's own making, that it is something he did by not putting those shares into a blind trust, raising questions about the impact this would have on his company, Morneau Shepell? As far as incorporation and the private asset of that French villa are concerned, would the member not agree that it is the finance minister who has put himself in this position, not the opposition, not the third party, and not any Canadian?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I fully agree with what my colleague said. If there is one person who deserves to be blamed today, it is the Minister of Finance himself.

Business of Supply

He could easily have avoided this situation by answering the questions, disclosing all his information, and declaring all his holdings, if any, by placing them in a blind trust and being as transparent as possible from the time he first took up his duties in November 2015. He did not do so. He tried to avoid answering questions, and he has only himself to blame for the situation we are in today.

If this motion has one goal, it is certainly not character assassination. With this motion, we only want to help him. We want to help the minister get out of this mess by declaring everything he submitted to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. That would clear up the situation once and for all. All we want to do is clear the air with regard to his true interests in his capacity as Minister of Finance.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Sherbrooke mentioned cynicism. It is important to consider that aspect in this matter.

[English]

We often have water here in the House and if I continue to put a drop of poison in this water, it becomes no less poisonous over time. As I continue to add more and more poison to this water, it becomes undrinkable. This is what is occurring in our politics. We have the Ethics Commissioner who has an opportunity to study this issue and make sure that we are not poisoning the well for all politicians, that we do not bring dishonour upon ourselves by bringing dishonour upon some other individual.

One of the things I have often heard is that when we are outside the House, we try to remove politics from the issue and say that a person works so hard for their constituency. The implication is that we say some things about each other in the House, but that outside the House we are friends.

I would like to remind members that we have to give the Ethics Commissioner the opportunity to make a ruling so that we can be aware of the issue, but not to go out and blame hon. members of the House, because at the end of the day, we have to work together and we do not want people in Canada to lose faith in their public institutions, but to continue to believe that these institutions can build a better day for all of us.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, at the beginning of my speech, I said that I have full confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We do not lack confidence in the commissioner but in the Minister of Finance, who is hiding the information and, being unscrupulous, has not declared all his interests. He says one thing and in the end—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Madam Speaker, there is a point of order. I believe the member said “being unscrupulous” when referring to someone in the House. I believe that is unparliamentary language that we should not be using in reference to other members.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will take comments, but this is a debate.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke has the floor to finish his comments.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I do not believe it is unparliamentary language. Honestly, I am not an expert in linguistics, but I believe that if we were unable to use the expression “being unscrupulous” we would have a problem.

I was saying that it is the Minister of Finance who is undermining people's confidence with his lack of transparency. He is trying to avoid answering questions, he is trying to avoid clarifying his situation, and he sometimes says one thing and then the opposite in the same sentence. The Prime Minister is not any clearer in his answers about his real interests.

People have confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, but they are not confident that the Minister of Finance will give real answers to her questions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Essex, International Trade; the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National Defence; the hon. member for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am greatly honoured to rise to speak on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay.

One of my Liberal colleagues said that we had to continue to show deference on this issue to the finance minister to reassure Canadians that they should have trust in the House. However, the question we are discussing today is a fundamental question about a breach of trust with Canadians. When I talk with Canadians across the country, quite frankly, they do not believe that Ottawa is interested in or will protect their basic interests, and we need look no further than the present finance minister.

We look at the situation today of the Sears workers who have been laid off thanks to the mismanagement by a hedge fund of what was once a stellar company. We see people whose basic pension benefits are at risk, and the most we hear from the Liberals is, “Well, that's really too bad, but it's before the courts.” It's the same thing we heard when Nortel went down, and the Abitibi workers lost their jobs, and the people across my riding who had their pension stolen by corporate executives like Peggy Witte. Members know that that kind of theft is not only legal in Canada, but also gets one bonuses for doing it. We will never see the government stand up and defend people whose pensions are being stolen from them, because they are fundamentally the party of the 1%.

Business of Supply

I am not saying this in an exaggerated fashion, because we have only to look at our present finance minister who is the privatized pension king of this country. The issue today, hot off the presses after all of the major national attention, is that he has finally written the Ethics Commissioner about the fact that the shares he receives from Morneau Shepell give him \$150,000 in pocket change a month, and an extra \$40 million since he has come into government.

Now the Liberals would tell us that this kind of money is virtuous, because a man who makes that much money and offers himself for public service is someone we should admire, as he can only be doing it for the benefit of all of us little people. I would like to believe that, but if we look at the issue in terms of where Morneau Shepell has been and where the present finance minister has been, a blind trust will not cut it.

I will refer members to a speech by the minister in 2013. He summarized it by saying, “Elderly poverty is not a problem.” I guess one has to own a villa in the south of France to think that elderly poverty is not a problem in Canada. However, in that speech he also made a number of statements about the push to get rid of defined pension benefit plans. He said “A significant number of our clients have parent companies or sister companies in the...United Kingdom.” He went on to say that the movement away from defined pension benefits has been easier there than in Canada and that “We need legislation enabling Target Benefit Plans and Shared Risk Plans in all Canadian jurisdictions.” He told his shareholders that we needed to move on legislation. In that same speech, he said that “As defined benefit plan consultants and administrators, we’ve been in the front row.”

What was one of the first pieces of legislation the minister brought forward in his own name? It was legislation that would especially benefit Morneau Shepell, Bill C-27, which is an attack on defined pension benefits in this country. He said it was necessary to give his company the advantage.

When discussions on changes in defined pension benefits began with the previous government, Morneau Shepell wanted its investors to know that the idea came from it. The proposed DBP framework the government outlined in its consultation paper is clearly modelled after the shared risk pension plans introduced in 2012 in New Brunswick. Morneau Shepell's experts were heavily involved in the design of that, which is what they do for a living. This is why he makes \$150,000 a month and his benefits have gone up by \$40 million. If one introduces legislation that will benefit his company, obviously the shares will go up.

How is this an ethical problem? Well, of course, when one is a Liberal, one does not think there is a problem with ethics, because he is a nice guy.

● (1640)

We have been told that we have been picking on him because he forgot to announce that he had his private French villa through a private corporation. The Liberals over there have been saying that any one of us could have made that same mistake. Perhaps. It is not a fair question to ask in this House, because the amount of money people earn here is much higher than the folks back home. Can we have a show of hands? How many people here own a villa in the south of France? I do not see any, and the minister is gone on the

Prime Minister's hide, so he is not here. I do not even know if he would have put up his hand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, order. I just want to remind the member for Timmins—James Bay that he is not allowed to indicate who is in and who is not in the House.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Madam Speaker, you are right. I meant to say that the finance minister probably would not put up his hand, because he might have forgotten that he owned the house.

This was the question. The Liberals again were saying I was mean to them, because they said, “That is really unfair, Charlie, because he actually did announce before—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I just want to remind the member that he may not refer to members, whether to himself or not, by first or last name.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I would like to thank the Speaker. I do not have a private corporation I can refer to myself as. I am just Joe Average.

Madam Speaker, the Liberals told me it was different. He forgot to mention it was a private corporation. There was silly me, thinking that all the people I know own houses with their families, not through private offshore corporations, but this man does.

Now, on October 17, he is saying that he is willing to look at the issue of a blind trust for the money he is making from Morneau Shepell. I do not think that cuts it, because we are looking at a man who said in 2013 that legislation was needed to attack defined pension benefits, which many workers and many seniors across this country depend on. Then he came into this House, and he was given the position as finance minister, and the first major piece of legislation he brought in was Bill C-27, which was the direct form of legislation his company required to undermine pension benefits for Canadian workers. All through that time, he was able to participate in directing his company, because it was not in a blind trust. Even if it were in a blind trust, how would anyone think that a man whose name is the company, Morneau Shepell, which makes its money getting rid of defined pension benefits, and brags about it, would bring in the legislation?

I am sorry, but putting it in a blind trust on October 17 and asking for advice from the Ethics Commissioner does not cut it. This is about a fundamental, shocking breach.

I have seen a lot of breaches in Parliament over the years, and I have seen a lot of dubious and bogus behaviour, but to have the Liberal government come in and tell us that this is somehow high-minded integrity and just a bit of absent-mindedness does not cut it.

Business of Supply

When I talk to Canadians across this country, they talk to me about their disappearing pensions. I want to talk about Lisa Okill, 100 years old, the first woman to run a Sears store, who is losing her pension benefits right now. We will never see anyone from Morneau Shepell or anyone in that government stand up to fight for that senior citizen.

It falls to us as parliamentarians to say that this kind of misuse of public office to look after the pals and friends of the Liberal Party is not acceptable. We have to hold this House to a higher standard, because Canadians have absolutely no reason to believe in a Prime Minister who had his \$1,500 cash for access meetings with Chinese billionaires, and when he was caught out and asked why he was doing it, answered that they were worried about the middle class, that they were meeting about the middle class. I guess we little people are supposed to say, "Wow, that is amazing. These Chinese billionaires paid \$1,500 to get the ear of the Prime Minister to talk about the middle class." Yes, I bet. How about, probably not?

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Charlie, you are not a little person.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Exactly.

Mr. Charlie Angus: If we are going to have a finance minister bringing legislation that has to do with pensions, then Bill C-27 will have to be withdrawn, because it is so obviously tarnished with the self-interest of him and his company and his offshore villa that it has no credibility. For anyone on the government side now to stand with that finance minister and say that they are going to continue to push this attack on defined pension benefits, when this man laid out the plan for his shareholders in 2013 and has followed through, it falls to the government to say that it will reject him and his bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I just want to remind the parliamentary secretary that if he has any comments or questions he should not be yelling them out but he should actually stand when it is time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to read to my friend from Timmins—James Bay from the "Statement on Open and Accountable Government" and I would ask him to comment on it:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest.

How is the government doing with that?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, it is going to be really hard to answer that question in a very short space of time.

I remember when the Prime Minister said not only is it a ministerial code but the Liberals are going to elevate it and as soon as they elevate it they are going to make sure that it is standard operating procedure. They ditched it immediately.

We are not talking about a finance minister who wrote a letter on behalf of one of his companies, which he is not allowed to do. We are not talking about a parliamentary secretary who writes a letter on behalf of a company in an area where it may have some work through Parliament, even if that individual was just trying to help a

local business as any other member of Parliament is allowed to do, because we need to have rules for parliamentary secretaries. We are talking about a minister who has not bothered to tell anybody that he is making \$150,000 a month directly from Morneau Shepell in the area of moving toward privatized pensions, who told his investors that we needed to change the legislation, and then stood for office and brought that legislation into Parliament, and is now trying to push it through while still being involved directly with Morneau Shepell.

The level of abuse of public trust is so much more elevated and it is incredibly elevated because we are dealing with the pensions of Canadians. People who do hard work year in and year out should be able to retire in dignity without having to worry about the Liberal government and its pals on Bay Street undermining them.

• (1650)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in regards to the issue of the minister's villa, this was a story in 2015, and the fact that the opposition is now trying to pick up on it is quite remarkable.

I want to ask the member a question more specifically to his comments about him being "Joe Public" and the "little guy" as he referred to himself. Does he really think that the members of the House represent "Joe Public"? Do we not have it a little bit better than them?

Mr. Bev Shipley: Absolutely.

Mr. Phil McColeman: What are you talking about? You've got to be kidding me.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is the member truly representing them by coming here and purporting that he is "Joe Public", that he is one of the "little guys"?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I understand that there is much participation in this particular debate but I do want to remind members that if they have questions or comments, instead of heckling or yelling across the way to please wait until questions and comments and feel free to stand up to be recognized.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, if the member for Kingston and the Islands is not here to represent "Joe Public", then he should get the heck out the door.

If the Liberals are here to look after their friends, their insiders, all the rich and the wealthy in this country then we have had 150 years of that and it is enough.

I am here to represent people who have been written off the political and economic map of this nation and they are being written off by the Liberal finance minister and his attack on the pensions of seniors and hard-working Canadians. If there are no Liberals willing to stand up and defend them, then they should just step out.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, we can agree that after 10 years in opposition purgatory, the Liberal government has not really changed its corporate culture.

Business of Supply

Who would my colleague say is the worst Minister of Finance between the dishonourable Paul Martin, who registered his ships in Barbados, or the current finance minister, who hid a villa in France?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, that is a tough question. I have to choose between Paul Martin and Morneau Shepell. It is the same party.

The problem is the lack of integrity in the Liberal Party, a party that does not believe that it has to defend the interests of the middle class and the working class. The Liberal Party has always preferred to defend the interests of the wealthy and multinationals. For example, the Minister of Finance says that the precarious employment situation is normal. It is not normal. It is the result of policies that favour multinationals and friends of the Liberal Party.

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, did we just hear the member for Kingston and the Islands ask if we really think we represent Joe Public? He stood and asked if we actually think we represent Joe Public in the House. I can tell him that this caucus is made up of farmers. It is made up of teachers. It is made up of construction workers who may own construction companies. It is made up of business people from across this country. We are Joe Public in the House. The reason we are here today is that the Liberals do not believe that they are. They do not believe they represent the public in this country. That is why they keep getting themselves into the trouble they are in.

I have been here probably too long now, but I remember one of them saying, "I am entitled to my entitlements." We all remember that. Fortunately, in the end, it cost that government its position, and it had to move over here. The Liberals moved back into government and brought that same attitude with them right from the beginning. I want to talk about that this afternoon.

We are not here just because of an issue concerning the Ethics Commissioner. We are here because of the attitude shown by the government that disrespects Canadians right across this country, particularly the attitude of the finance minister and the Prime Minister of this country.

I will be sharing my time today with the member for Peace River—Westlock.

We just heard the NDP member talk about the finance minister, in 2013, giving a speech explaining changes to pension plans and benefits he wanted to see that would benefit his company, Morneau Shepell. Let us fast forward to his being elected and appointed finance minister, when he introduces Bill C-27. Anyone who looks at the bill knows it would accomplish pretty much everything he wanted in 2013.

We know he is going to leave here. Where is going to go? It actually does not make much difference if his interests are in a blind trust right now or not, because he is taking care of them from here. That is the problem. That is the heartbeat of a Liberal right there. We are here today not just because of that one issue around ethics but because of an attitude the current government has had from day one.

There is a total disinterest by the Liberals in being here today, and we know why that is. However, I have to ask if it is because they have a sense of entitlement that they do not even need to be here to

answer the questions Canadians are asking. We have seen that for the last month on the tax changes. Liberals want nothing to do with Canadians. They want nothing to do with talking to them. They want nothing to do with town halls. They want nothing to do with extending the consultation period.

They ask if we represent Joe Public. We actually meet Joe Public. They have been hiding in their offices for the last two months, afraid of the Canadian public.

Is it arrogance that keeps them from being here today? Is it carelessness? From the beginning, we have seen that they just have not been able to get the job done. They are running massive deficits. They have not been able to keep virtually any promise they have made. Is it because of corruption that they do not want to be here today to defend themselves? The opaqueness we are seeing is not meant to inform Canadians; it is actually meant to push them away and protect the Liberal government.

I heard this afternoon that they are begging for more time and that we treat the finance minister with great respect because somehow it is poisoning the well if we dare question the direction the Liberal government is going.

Let us talk about what is expected of ministers. Members are elected and are appointed to cabinet or to the position of parliamentary secretary, and it is expected that they will not be able to control their assets. They are expected to either sell them off or put them in a blind trust at a distance so they cannot have any influence over them. All of us who were in that situation had to give up control of our assets.

What is it that the finance minister has done? Nobody really knows. The further we go, the more convoluted this gets and the more unsure we are about what he has actually done with his assets. We heard today that he could be making up to \$150,000 a month. My Liberal colleague across the way talked about how we are privileged to be here. The finance minister is making the equivalent of an MP's salary every month just in dividends from his company, according to the information.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Is that a bad thing?

Mr. David Anderson: The gentleman across the way asked if that is a bad thing. It is a bad thing if the Canadian public does not know what he is doing and if he has been fooling around with his assets for the last two years so that he is getting a benefit that the Canadian public is not aware of. We are supposed to list those kinds of things, and Canadians are supposed to be aware of them.

Yesterday at the press conference, the Prime Minister himself would not let the finance minister answer questions. It starts to look like someone is guilty of something.

• (1655)

The Prime Minister is not exactly lily-white in this whole situation either. Lately, he has been bragging about how someone else manages and controls his family fortune. We certainly hope that is so and that the Prime Minister holds himself to a higher standard than he has allowed the finance minister to hold.

Business of Supply

From the beginning the Prime Minister said that the government did not want to see or smell corruption anywhere. Right or wrong, from the very beginning we have questioned the ethics of the government. The Prime Minister has been in the middle of it from when he took his family with him to state dinners and left his ministers at home. A natural resource crisis with softwood lumber is going on but he leaves the minister at home, because he wants to take his in-laws with him to a state dinner.

There are numerous examples we can use. How about the one last Christmas? The Prime Minister went to a billionaire's island. I would say he got a personal benefit. The ethics code does not allow us to get a personal benefit from our position and the opportunities that we have. I would say that taking a private jet to a private island and spending 10 days there enjoying someone's hospitality in a fancy resort would be a private benefit. We have not heard anything yet whether that was in fact some sort of violation of the code, so why are we surprised when other cabinet ministers start dabbling as well?

We can talk about office renovations and their cost. When new ministers decide they will spend \$600,000 or \$800,000 on an office renovation, it does not matter because the tone is being set by the Prime Minister and his finance minister in the government. The Prime Minister claimed that the Liberals were going to be clean and accountable. We are just not seeing that.

It seems to be the way the government is that if it can find a loophole, it will take advantage of it and move through it. That is okay to it and there is no problem as long as it can find the loophole and squeeze through it. The problem is that the Liberals treat everyone else differently. When they start talking about regular people being tax cheats for using using corporate structures not to pay taxes, we know they are treating them differently from themselves.

I want to take a short look at the history of this government. I have talked a bit about some of the things it has done and the ethical standards it has failed to set up. The Liberals continue to mislead Canadians about the consequences of the tax cuts, but I would like to talk about the last six weeks in particular and the approach they have taken to Canadians.

The Liberals accused Canadians of being tax cheats, the people who have used some sort of corporate structure for their small businesses or their farms at a time when the Prime Minister and finance minister have had their own trusts. However, we found out they have foreign corporations in Barbados and France. Would they be putting those corporations in place if they were not trying to avoid Canadian taxes? I doubt it.

With its last approach to tax policy, the Liberal government has dragged millions of Canadians into a situation wherein they will face increased taxes. It is an attack on small companies, private business, employees, and agriculture. We know the details. Private investment is being taxed at levels of up to 73%. That is what the Liberals were proposing. They said, "Okay, we have got income sharing going on in small companies. We have to stop that. Well, if we can't stop it, we are going to go in and are going to make sure we spend time with these people to see if they are actually doing the work they claim they are doing."

Are the Liberals serious? Are they going to put in place a reasonable test that will result in inspectors being on farms? Most of the people who work for the government cannot even come close to working the hours that farmers and their spouses work on their own operations.

In addition, the government talked about capital gains changes that would basically make it cheaper for people to sell their assets to a stranger than to their own children. Now, we hear it is backing off from that. The only reason it is backing off is the pressure it has been put under by this side of the House and Canadians across Canada.

The Liberal government threw out a little tiny promise it made, refusing to keep it for two years until it was in big trouble. Then it decided to move ahead with a tax break that was in place two years ago, but which it chose to disregard and remove, and now it wants to put it back in.

Canadians are supposed to treat this policy and the government seriously. It will not work, as people are starting to see through the government. They are starting to see its arrogance and sense of entitlement. As well, they are starting to smell something even worse, which is a deep-rooted sense of corruption in the government.

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in following up on this, I took a shot at the member for Timmins—James Bay, and he took one back at me. I respect that. However, given that the member who just spoke also brought it up, perhaps I will try again to say what I had already said the first time. Maybe the members opposite could listen to me this time.

The member for Timmins—James Bay referred to himself as Joe Public. He referred to himself as the little guy. What I was saying is that despite—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If I did refer to myself as the little guy, I would like to retract that comment. I am not a little guy. In fact, I have put on a lot of weight on the leadership bid. However, on standing up for average people, and if we call them the average Joe, then yes, I will do that every single day of my life.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, at least now I know the member has heard what I said and has understood it. I appreciate the fact that he retracted it. I am sure he comes here with the best intentions, as we all do, to represent everyone, but to suggest we are the little guy, I think is extremely disingenuous.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I do not know what palace he comes from, but I come from an average family farm in southwestern Saskatchewan. My grandfather and his brother came here and homesteaded. My father and uncle farmed together, and I farmed with them. I would call that a pretty average Canadian.

Business of Supply

My colleague, the finance critic, talked this morning about his parents being teachers. Two teachers, and he has the privilege, as I do and many of us do, to be here in the House of Commons to represent the average person across the country. If he thinks average people are different than the little people, that is up to him. On this side of the House we do not have an extra \$33 million to lose track of. We do not have a French villa that we cannot remember to declare. They may have that across there. We represent average Canadians, the little people across the country. They certainly do not, especially when they stand up and argue against the fact that they should be doing that.

• (1705)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up with my hon. colleague, because this fundamental question about who we represent is, to me, at the heart of what parliamentary democracy should be. If we call this the House of Commons it should be the house of the common people. However, we are being told by the Liberals that we are somehow being mean to people who forget they own French villas, that we are supposed to be in solidarity with them because of our paycheques, that this is somehow the rich boys' club, whereas I would say that the people of Canada pay us very well to represent their interests, not to represent the interests of people who cannot remember the fact that they own French villas.

My hon. colleague and I have not agreed on very much over the years. I have known him since 2004. We disagree on a lot of things, but we do agree about defending our regions. I know my hon. colleague defended his region. I will defend my region. The people I represent are hard-working. They play by the rules, and they get none of the benefits that Morneau Shepell gets on a daily basis.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for pointing that out because we all insist on representing our constituents and our regions.

The government is killing us in western Canada. It could care less about what is going on out there. Its members are not speaking out for their interests. An example is the pipeline. They play this hypocritical game with pipelines, pretending they are approving things that will never go through. They have changed the rules around pipelines a dozen times, so it is impossible to get natural resource development done properly, and we are losing investment by the billions of dollars. We have probably lost close to half a trillion dollars of investment in western Canada because of the policies of the government, and he stands across the way and says to us we are not the average people. We are the average people, and we are going to stand up for the average people in our ridings.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I acknowledge the next speaker, I just want to advise the member that I will have to interrupt him at some point because of the orders of the day with regard to the votes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I usually say it is my pleasure to rise to speak, but today I definitely question why we have to be here to discuss this. It impacts all Canadians significantly when the Minister of Finance's ethics are on the line. That is what we are discussing today, and I am sad we have to be here to that. Nonetheless will go forward.

My riding is a riding of farmers, loggers, and oil field workers. That is typically what we do. My farmers get out of bed every morning to farm, and it has been rough lately. The crops are under snow. Last year they were under snow as well in the fall. Therefore, we are looking at two years of significant crop failure.

I will talk a bit about a farmer named Guido. He is a 24-year-old farmer who still lives with his parents. Two years ago he saved up enough money to rent a quarter section of land and seed it. He drives a logging truck all winter so he can save up enough money to put in a crop. Last year, it was pretty much a total failure. He picked himself up, drove a truck again throughout the winter, and saved up enough money to rent the land again and put in another crop. We are talking about that spirit. A total failure one year, he gets up and does it again.

He does not have a French villa to go back to during the winter. He has to drive a logging truck. He made a significant amount of money doing that and he invested it forward. He has the opportunities at this point in his life to take a total loss into his stride and go forward. That is what we are dealing with when it comes to farming in northern Alberta. It is a risky business.

Farmers are entirely dependent upon the weather. They are always looking at the weather to see if it is going to rain enough, if it is going to rain too much, or if it is going to be too dry, all of these kinds of things. Is the frost going to come early, or is it going to come late, or will they get a good harvest? Is the price going to be good? That is what we deal with when it comes to farming.

I mentioned that he also drives a logging truck. Many people in northern Alberta are not tied to just one industry. They often will work in one industry and subsidize their efforts in another area. I know many people who service a number of oil wells, who are farming on the side, and who are perhaps souping up trucks at a hot rod shop down the street. That is very common. Many people work three jobs in northern Alberta just to make a living.

Now, to be told they are nothing but tax cheats, that if they have a private corporation to limit their liability in the particular area they do business in is merely just a way to avoid paying taxes, is disingenuous on the part of the government. It is also severely hypocritical when the finance minister himself has, what appears to me, put in place private corporations to avoid paying taxes. Many of the people I know who have private corporations do that purely to limit their liability, not to avoid paying taxes. However, the finance minister on the other hand appears to have put in place private corporations purely to avoid paying taxes.

Business of Supply

We are here today asking the finance minister to table documents between November 4, 2015 to July 18, 2017. We would like to know where the finance minister is on this, because his ethics and integrity are critical to the functioning of the country. If we cannot trust our finance minister, where will we go from here? We are already suspicious of the finance minister coming after significant amounts of taxes.

The Liberal government has a spending problem, and it is looking everywhere for the next dollar. It is not looking at the next million dollars; it is looking for the next dollar. I know this because it is going after employee discounts. It said that this was a mistake. If this was a mistake, it did not happen overnight. Somebody was drafting that document and building that website. I know from my own experience that drafting and building a website does not happen overnight. It typically takes a minimum of two or three days.

If the Liberal government is going after the employee discount, what else is it going after? We know it is already going after the small businesses when it comes to income sprinkling. When people are shareholders in a farm, they are asked if they actually do any work on that farm.

• (1710)

Farming is a way of life more than it is a business. It is said that if we love what we do, we never work a day in our lives. Therefore, to ask farmers what they did for their company today, they would scratch their heads and say that they were not exactly sure, that they did the thing they loved to do. If they were asked what their individual tasks were, they would say that they were not sure, that they would have to go through them.

Are we going to require an accounting of all the individual tasks that get done? Farmers do not punch the clock like everyone else. They typically take their paycheques one day of the year, when they deliver their crops to either the terminal in Westlock, or drive it down to Edmonton or that kind of thing.

Therefore, we know the government is significantly out of touch when it comes after things like employee discounts, or small businesses or family farmers. We know it does not understand what it is like to be the average everyday Canadian. The hypocrisy stinks. I know that the people I represent up in northern Alberta were suspicious of the current government when it was elected and their suspicions have been confirmed, for sure.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1750)

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

The Speaker: The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley was not in his seat at the time when you began to read the motion. However, in the spirit of co-operation, we are prepared to allow him to have his vote count.

• (1755)

The Speaker: I would ask the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to confirm whether that is in fact the case, as it requires unanimous consent?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I indeed entered the House as you were rising to read the question, and I sat in my seat. I may have missed the very first part. If my vote should not be counted, of course I defer to the House. However, I was able to certainly understand the question, because it is a good one.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the member's vote to be counted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 363)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Aboultaif | Albrecht |
| Allison | Anderson |
| Angus | Aubin |
| Barlow | Barsalou-Duval |
| Beaulieu | Benson |
| Benzen | Bergen |
| Bernier | Bezan |
| Blaikie | Blaney (North Island—Powell River) |
| Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) | Block |
| Boucher | Boudrias |
| Boutin-Sweet | Brassard |
| Brousseau | Brown |
| Calkins | Cannings |
| Caron | Carrie |
| Chong | Choquette |
| Christopherson | Clarke |
| Clement | Cooper |
| Cullen | Davies |
| Deltell | Diotte |
| Doherty | Donnelly |
| Dreeschen | Dubé |
| Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona) | Dusseault |
| Duvall | Eglinski |
| Falk | Fast |
| Finley | Fortin |
| Gallant | Garrison |

Business of Supply

Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Hughes
Johns
Julian
Kent
Kusie
Lake
Laverdière
Lobb
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Motz
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Raitt
Rankin
Reid
Saganash
Saroya
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Genuis
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Kelly
Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lukiwski
Maguire
Marcil
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nantel
Nicholson
O'Toole
Pauzé
Quach
Ramsey
Rayes
Richards
Sansoucy
Schmale
Shiple
Sorenson
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 132

Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Long
Ludwig
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Socurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
Ng
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sorbara
Tan
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Longfield
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sohi
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskij
Zahid — 158

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jowhari
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brisson
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Chen
Cuzner
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Gameau
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[*Translation*]

OPPOSITION MOTION—PHARMACARE

The House resumed from October 5 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, October 5, 2017, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway relating to the business of supply.

● (1805)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 364*)

YEAS

Members

Angus
Benson
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Brosseau
Caron
Christopherson
Davies
Dubé
Dusseault
Ellis
Fisher
Garrison
Johns
Julian

Aubin
Blaikie
Boutin-Sweet
Cannings
Choquette
Cullen
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Eyolfson
Fonseca
Hughes
Jolibois
Kwan

Business of Supply

Laverdière
Malcolmson
Mathysen
Nantel
Ramsey
Saganash
Stewart
Weir— 43

Lobb
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Quach
Rankin
Sansoucy
Trudel

May (Cambridge)
McColeman
McDonald
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Motz
Nassif
Nault
Nicholson
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Reid
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sopuck
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Thériault
Tootoo
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewszkyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer— 247

McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-

Morrissey
Murray
Nater
Ng
Nuttall
Oliver
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Raitt
Rayes
Richards
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sajjan
Sangha
Saroya
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sohi
Sorbara
Stanton
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tilson
Trost
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Aldag
Alleslev
Amos
Anderson
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benzen
Bernier
Bezan
Bittle
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault
Boucher
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Chen
Clarke
Cooper
Cuzner
DeCoursey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fast
Finley
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Gallant
Généreux
Gerretsen
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Harder
Harvey
Hoback
Housefather
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Kelly
Khalid
Kusie
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Liepert
Long
Ludwig
MacKenzie
Maguire
Marcel

Albrecht
Alghabra
Allison
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bergen
Berthold
Bibeau
Blair
Block
Bossio
Boudrias
Bratina
Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chong
Clement
Cormier
Dabrusin
Deltell
Dhillon
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Falk
Fillmore
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Genuis
Gill
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jowhari
Kent
Kitchen
Lake
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Longfield
Lukivski
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[*English*]

OCEANS ACT

The House resumed from October 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-55.

● (1810)

(The House divided on the motion which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 365)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|---|
| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Alleslev | Amos |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Aubin | Ayoub |
| Badawey | Bagnell |
| Bains | Barsalou-Duval |
| Baylis | Beaulieu |
| Beech | Bennett |
| Benson | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blaikie |
| Blair | Blaney (North Island—Powell River) |
| Boissonnault | Bossio |
| Boudrias | Boutin-Sweet |
| Bratina | Breton |
| Brison | Brosseau |
| Caesar-Chavannes | Cannings |
| Caron | Carr |
| Casey (Cumberland—Colchester) | Casey (Charlottetown) |
| Chagger | Chen |
| Choquette | Christopherson |
| Cormier | Cullen |
| Cuzner | Dabrusin |
| Davies | DeCoursey |
| Dhaliwal | Dhillon |
| Di Iorio | Donnelly |
| Drouin | Dubé |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona) | Dusseault |
| Duvall | Dzerowicz |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Ellis | Erskine-Smith |
| Eyking | Eyolfson |
| Fillmore | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fortin | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser (West Nova) | Fraser (Central Nova) |
| Fry | Fuhr |
| Garneau | Garrison |
| Gerretsen | Gill |
| Goldsmith-Jones | Goodale |
| Gould | Graham |
| Hajdu | Hardie |
| Harvey | Hehr |
| Holland | Housefather |
| Hughes | Hussen |
| Hutchings | Iacono |
| Johns | Jolibois |
| Joly | Jones |
| Jowhari | Julian |
| Khalid | Kwan |
| Lambropoulos | Lametti |
| Lamoureux | Lapointe |
| Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation) | Laverdière |
| LeBlanc | Lebouthillier |
| Lefebvre | Lemieux |
| Leslie | Levitt |
| Lightbound | Long |
| Longfield | Ludwig |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Malcolmson |
| Maloney | Marcil |
| Masse (Windsor West) | Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia) |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | McCrimmon |
| McDonald | McKay |
| McKenna | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLeod (Northwest Territories) | Mendès |
| Mendicino | Mihychuk |
| Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs) | |
| Monsef | Murray |
| Morrissey | Nassif |
| Nantel | Ng |
| Nault | Oliver |
| Oliphant | Ouellette |
| O'Regan | Pauzé |
| Paradis | Peterson |
| Peschisolido | |

Business of Supply

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Petitpas Taylor | Philpott |
| Picard | Plamondon |
| Poissant | Quach |
| Qualtrough | Ramsey |
| Rankin | Ratansi |
| Rioux | Robillard |
| Rodriguez | Romanado |
| Rota | Rudd |
| Ruimy | Rusnak |
| Saganash | Sahota |
| Sajjan | Samson |
| Sangha | Sansoucy |
| Sarai | Scarpaleggia |
| Schiefke | Schulte |
| Serré | Sgro |
| Shanahan | Sheehan |
| Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon) | Sohi |
| Sorbara | Stewart |
| Tabbara | Tan |
| Tassi | Thériault |
| Tootoo | Trudel |
| Vandal | Vandenbeld |
| Virani | Weir |
| Whalen | Wilkinson |
| Wilson-Raybould | Wrzesnewskyj |
| Young | Zahid — 206 |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|--|--|
| Aboultaif | Albrecht |
| Allison | Anderson |
| Benzen | Bergen |
| Bernier | Berthold |
| Bezan | Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) |
| Block | Boucher |
| Brassard | Brown |
| Calkins | Carrie |
| Chong | Clarke |
| Clement | Cooper |
| Deltell | Diotte |
| Doherty | Dreeshen |
| Egliniski | Falk |
| Fast | Finley |
| Gallant | Généreux |
| Genius | Gladu |
| Godin | Gourde |
| Harder | Hoback |
| Jeneroux | Kelly |
| Kent | Kitchen |
| Kusie | Lake |
| Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Liepert |
| Lobb | Lukiwski |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| McCaughey (Edmonton West) | McColeman |
| McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) | Motz |
| Nater | Nicholson |
| Nuttall | O'Toole |
| Paul-Hus | Raitt |
| Rayes | Reid |
| Richards | Saroya |
| Schmale | Shields |
| Shiple | Sopuck |
| Sorenson | Stanton |
| Strahl | Stubbs |
| Sweet | Tilson |
| Trost | Van Kesteren |
| Van Loan | Vecchio |
| Viersen | Wagantall |
| Warawa | Warkentin |
| Waugh | Webber |
| Wong | Yurdiga |
| Zimmer — 85 | |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Adjournment Proceedings

(Motion agreed to and bill referred to a committee)

It being 6:14 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

(Bill C-348. On the Order: Private Members' Bills:)

April 10, 2017—second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities of Bill C-348, An Act to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act (persons with disabilities)—Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh is not present to move the order as announced in today's Notice Paper. Accordingly, the item will be dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1815)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise tonight to address the very serious attacks on Canada's supply managed sectors by the American government and the lack of leadership and strength against this attack from the Liberal government.

The NAFTA renegotiations began in August, but even before that Donald Trump took aim at our dairy farmers, stating, "We can't let Canada or anybody else take advantage and do what they did to our workers and to our farmers."

Trump has continually been belligerent, accusing Canada of violating global trade obligations, and our Prime Minister simply sits beside him stunned and grinning. Just last Sunday, the U.S. NAFTA negotiating team said that it wanted Canadian access for 400,000 metric tonnes of fluid milk and 17% of our poultry products.

Under the trans-Pacific partnership, Canada granted access to 3.25% of its dairy market and 2.1% of its chicken market. Since the U.S. has withdrawn from TPP, it is looking for even greater concessions under NAFTA. There was never any doubt on this side of the House that supply management would be under attack. The only surprise seems to be from the government.

The former Conservative and the current Liberal governments showed a real lack of forethought when they opened the door and

market access to our supply managed sectors under trade deals like TPP and CETA. Because of their poor judgment now, they have created a space for the Americans to demand concessions that the government must not make.

I would like to talk about CETA. The Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement is a trade deal that the Conservatives wrote and the Liberals rammed through Parliament. The Liberals did not consult adequately with farmers or producers and they did not provide adequate compensation programs for the losses our dairy farmers have endured.

Instead, the Liberal government only agreed to a controversial investment assistance program. After only a week of it being open, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada announced it would no longer accept any applications from dairy farmers. Without access to the compensation that is owed to them and a lack of funds, several dairy producers are now hitting a wall.

During the 2015 election campaign, the Liberals promised to compensate dairy producers for concessions made during CETA negotiations, but they backtracked on this investment program.

Sadly, it is not the first time the Liberals have harmed dairy producers or other farmers protected by our supply managed system. Since taking office, the Liberal government has been completely inactive in the raw milk sector, and they succumbed to the European Union regarding the allocation of the tariff quotas.

The NDP has repeatedly warned the government that dairy producers would suffer with only the \$250 million allocated, but it has pushed through with this bad trade deal anyway. Now we see it letting these same farmers down during the renegotiation of NAFTA.

Canadian farmers have benefited from the supply managed system since the early 1970s. This system sets the price and creates stability for dairy, egg, and poultry producers. Supply management has proven to be an effective model that equalizes the benefits of dairy and poultry production across consumers, farmers, and processors, and stabilizes the industry against price shocks or oversupply.

This attack on supply management cannot continue. Once again, will the Liberal government show real leadership and finally tell the U.S. that supply management and further market access are not on the table?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Essex for raising this important question.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government fully supports the supply management system for dairy products and Canada's entire dairy industry. Producers and processors of dairy products, poultry, and eggs in Canada play an important role in the prosperity and sustainable growth of our country. Supply management is a system that our producers chose and that has been working well for many years. It benefits the Canadian economy, and I can assure my colleague that we will protect and defend it.

With respect to trade negotiations, Canada's position has always been to vigorously promote and defend the interests of all agricultural industries, including supply managed industries.

Import controls are a pillar of supply management. Therefore, it is important for the government to maintain its effectiveness while ensuring the competitiveness of the agricultural processing sector when conducting trade negotiations as well.

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, Canada and the United States both benefit from the highly integrated and efficient supply chains created as a result of the agreement.

The fact that Canada and the United States are each other's top trading partner is proof of that integration.

On August 16, 2017, Canada, the United States, and Mexico met in Washington, D.C., to initiate talks about updating NAFTA. The latest round of talks took place from October 11 to 17, 2017. The Government of Canada is consulting Canadians across the country and in every sector, including those with supply management, about the NAFTA negotiations.

The government will continue to consult Canadians throughout the negotiations, with Global Affairs Canada keeping its online consultation portal open for that purpose.

I can assure the member for Essex that Canadians' views will be taken into account and that Canada will not accept a new NAFTA that does not benefit Canadians.

Like any other country, we will vigorously defend our interests in all sectors, including the supply management system. Any U.S. proposal to eliminate supply management is simply unacceptable.

● (1820)

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, I am surprised but happy to hear the member opposite saying that the Liberals will not accept that at the table. At this point, I hope that is being communicated well across our country, and that everyone will be watching tonight and hear the parliamentary secretary say that we will not open supply management.

My question goes back to the member, and it has to do with where we are now in these negotiations. Of course, the U.S. has thrown this on the table. From what I can hear from the member across, he is saying quite clearly then that we will not enter into negotiations around that and that potentially we will leave the table. I am not sure what the option is.

I would like to hear from the member what it is the Liberals have planned at this point to communicate that to the U.S. I have not heard that quite so strongly from the minister. Can the member

opposite enlighten us in this House on how the Liberals plan to communicate that to the U.S., and what their plan is now at the negotiating table around this issue?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Madam Speaker, the government has proven that it is defending supply management in Canada.

Canadian officials are keeping open lines of communication with the United States to dispel the many misleading statements about Canadian dairy policies. Specifically, Canada has reminded the United States that their excess milk production is the reason American producers are in the situation they are in, and that the United States already has a trade surplus exceeding \$400 million thanks to its dairy product trade with Canada. Our officials also reminded the United States that Canada is not to blame for the global economic conditions affecting both Canadian and American producers. On the contrary, supply management is the reason that Canada's milk production meets but does not exceed our country's needs. Canada will continue to stand up for the supply management system—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a question that I originally asked on May 9 when I was questioning the trust that people have in our Minister of National Defence when it comes to the lives of those who serve.

He has made misleading comments on numerous occasions, from embellishment of his record to the capability gap he fabricated about our fighter jets, and other misleading comments in Iraq and on other issues.

Last night, during adjournment proceedings, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence actually built on to the embellishment of the minister's record, saying in his closing comments:

His missions as a reservist in Bosnia and his three tours in Afghanistan make him an example to us all.

I agree with that 100%. As a veteran, he did that.

However, then he went on to say:

We all know he helped fight Daesh.

First and foremost, the minister never fought Daesh. He was fighting the Taliban. He was fighting al-Qaeda. Again, it is a bit of stretch of the truth. We definitely know that as a minister, he has provided policy and some direction to our Chief of Defence Staff, who then directs our special operation forces, those who are out there helping our allies and coalition partners in Iraq and Syria in the fight against ISIS or Daesh. However, the minister himself never directly fought Daesh. I just want to point out that embellishment by the parliamentary secretary.

Adjournment Proceedings

The credibility of the defence minister goes to a number of different issues. We talked about the embellishment of his record in Operation Medusa, that many have also called “stolen valour”. However, there is more than just that. It is more about the transparency of the minister and the government. It is about how we do not get technical briefings anymore on Operation Impact and other deployments that Canada is involved in, such as in Latvia, Ukraine, and elsewhere.

We know that the minister has embellished the truth as to whether or not we should have pulled our CF-18s out of the fight against ISIS in Iraq, when that was done back in December 2015. He had meetings with Iraqi and Kurdish officials and said they had not had one discussion about the CF-18s. However, through access to information requests, we have seen the memo for government officials who accompanied the minister in those meetings who were told that the Iraqi and Kurdish forces were very upset that we were withdrawing our CF-18s.

It was brought up not just once, not twice, but in the memo it actually said that it was brought up on numerous occasions when the minister was asked to consider the decision. This is significant, again, in terms of how the minister has been fast and loose with the truth.

We went through this whole ordeal last spring, when the minister had okayed the reduction in danger pay for our troops involved in Operation Impact, with those serving in Kuwait going to see a cut to their pay and taxable benefits of \$1,500 to \$1,800 per month. One soldier who spoke to me off the record said, “It feels like we got kicked in the stomach.”

It took a lot of embarrassment to force the minister to change that. Even through the summer, he was still struggling to find a way through that. Then of course there is the defence spending.

I am just putting it on the record again that the minister continues to mislead Canadians, has not been transparent, and that Canadians deserve better.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing us back to a question that was first asked five months ago, for the second evening in a row.

I know he listens carefully to our debates, and yes, he was quite right to point out the mistake I made yesterday when I mentioned Daesh. It must have been in the wake of the victory in Mosul under the mandate of the Minister of National Defence.

I appreciate the opportunity the member is giving me to talk about the defence minister's professionalism and unwavering commitment to our men and women in uniform and our armed forces as a whole. In that regard, as I told the member opposite on May 9, the minister worked very hard on developing a new defence policy following the most extensive consultation process in the past 20 years. That policy was released last June. Our friends opposite have not said a word about it. Our colleagues opposite are not talking about the new policy because it is good news for all members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

We absolutely understand that without them, without their dedication and conviction, and without the support of their families, Canada cannot achieve its defence objectives. That is why we have put them at the heart of our new defence policy. Today, the minister, the Canadian Armed Forces, and the Department of National Defence are focusing all their attention on implementing our policy. This policy lays out a bold vision for ensuring the protection of our fellow citizens, guaranteeing security in North America, and promoting Canada's engagement with the world.

Our plan is an ambitious one, containing no fewer than 128 separate initiatives. However, it is above all a realistic, fully costed, and fully funded plan to help Canada meet the defence challenges of today and tomorrow. I have said this more than once in the House, but the Minister of National Defence has one priority, which is to ensure that our soldiers get the support, training, and resources they need in order to do what we ask them to do. The Minister of National Defence has been a particularly effective spokesperson, given that defence spending will increase by close to 70% over 10 years under the new policy.

Thanks to that stable, predictable funding, we have undertaken one of the biggest modernization efforts in decades. We will replace our surface ship fleet by investing in 15 Canadian surface combatants and two joint support ships. We will replace our existing CF-18 fleet with 88 fighter jets to strengthen our sovereignty and fulfill our NORAD and NATO commitments. We will acquire new joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms. We will stimulate cutting-edge research and innovation in key defence sectors, which will enable our military forces to adapt to rapidly changing technology and maintain interoperability with our allies.

We will take better care of our military personnel and their families. We will invest in recruitment, retention, and training. Those are just some of the steps the Minister of National Defence has taken to better support our troops. The minister is determined to do what needs to be done to ensure the success of our armed forces and defend Canadians' interests, and we see outstanding proof of that every day.

● (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, we have had many discussions on this. My hon. friend must not have been listening when I said, on the defence policy review, that we do not believe it. In their first two budgets, the Liberals cut \$3.7 billion in the first budget and \$8.5 billion in the second budget. That was \$12 billion in defence spending gone, and all the promises the Liberals made in the defence policy for new equipment will not take place until after the next election.

Adjournment Proceedings

The member mentioned the CF-18 fighter jet replacement. That has turned into a circus, from inventing a capability gap, which all the experts say does not exist—and again that undermines the credibility of the minister himself—and then the member went on to talk about what happened to sole sourcing for the Super Hornets, and then the Bombardier-Boeing fights started. Now, the Liberals are actually going to buy used, worn-out F-18 legacy Hornets from Australia.

This is not the way to serve our military. The Liberals have not bought any new kit, they continue to mislead Canadians, and we deserve better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet our troops in other countries and here in Canada. Last night, at the leadership dinner for members of the command staff in the capital, I really noticed the enthusiasm of all the military members, but especially that of the chief of the defence staff, General Vance, for this new policy.

For the first time, members of the military feel like they are at the heart of this policy. We are looking after them, their families, their training, and their equipment. For the first time, we have a budget designed to ensure they have this equipment, that is to say fighter planes and ships. This is a far cry from the Conservatives' plans for just six surface ships.

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, many times I have risen in the House to speak out and demand that legislative changes be made to eliminate the unjust cessation provisions targeting refugees brought in by the previous government. Every time I do so, I basically get the same response, such as the one I received from the parliamentary secretary in May, who said, “We acknowledge that there is room for improvement to further enhance refugee protection while ensuring that we preserve the integrity of Canada's asylum system.”

The Liberals have been acknowledging that there is room for improvement since November 2015, but like so many of the Liberal election promises, it is all talk and no action.

That is not all. Worse still, the government is spending millions of dollars per year to strip away refugees' permanent resident status, simply because individuals have travelled back to their countries of origin, regardless of the reason.

Imagine people who arrived as refugees and have spent 20 years here building new lives, contributing to Canadian society, and starting families. Years later, significant changes in the situation in their countries of origin take place, making it safe for them to travel back, maybe to see family or bury a loved one. At the time of travel, there is no law that says that their status would be put at risk if they went back to their countries of origin. However, when they apply for citizenship, instead of reciting the oath of citizenship, CBSA files a cessation application against them, and they are, all of a sudden, faced with a situation where their permanent resident status can be revoked and they can be deported. This is wrong. What is worse is that the government even acknowledges that this is wrong, yet since

the passage of Bill C-31, nothing has changed. In fact, 575 individuals have had cessation applications brought against them.

Why has the Liberal government refused to repeal these provisions? The efforts of Canadians from coast to coast during the Syrian refugee initiative showed Canada's humanitarian spirit and how hard we are all willing to work to help those in need.

As of January 2017, 40,000 Syrian refugees have resettled. Is the government telling them that Canada can strip away their status here and deport them if they travel back to their countries of origin for any reason? I do not think so. The government proudly proclaims that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. Why then do we treat refugees with this injustice? Why are they not provided the same mobility rights other Canadians have? After all, do we not abide by our own Charters of Rights? That is my question to the government.

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Vancouver East for her question. I understand her concerns, but I would like to provide some background information.

Canada has a long and proud tradition of offering protection to those who need it. We have one of the fairest and most generous immigration and asylum systems in the world. Our immigration laws are applied impartially, based on facts, and they are meant to accord with the principle of due process.

Under Canada's immigration laws, people can lose their refugee status if it is proven that they no longer require Canada's protection. The grounds for revoking someone's refugee status are consistent with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Generally, when a protected person returns to the country from which they fled, for example, this suggests that they no longer require Canada's protection and they no longer qualify as a protected person.

Canada offers permanent residence for those who are determined to need refugee protection. Those subject to loss of refugee status because they voluntarily returned to their country of persecution or because they obtained protection from another country have demonstrated that they no longer need protection from Canada.

To cease a person's refugee status, the government must make a representation to the Immigration and Refugee Board, an independent agency that determines whether the person has lost his or her status. These decisions rest on strong and compelling evidence. The IRB's authority to determine whether someone is no longer entitled to protection is not new. The authority to revoke permanent resident status, including permanent residence for refugees, is nothing new either.

Adjournment Proceedings

However, as part of the refugee reforms made in 2012, the effect of a decision on loss of refugee status has changed such that in most cases, it leads to the loss of permanent resident status. That said, nothing has changed when it comes to the asylum system reforms for facilitating the presentation of a request for loss of refugee status, and the grounds for presenting such a request have not changed.

The Immigration and Refugee Board still requires strong, convincing evidence in order to determine that a person has lost their refugee status. The government will continue to consult stakeholders, as it has been doing, so we can make improvements to the current asylum system. I can assure the members of the House and the member for Vancouver East that we will be reviewing the policies and legislative provisions put in place over the past few years and making improvements.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the government has been consulting ever since it was elected. In fact, the former minister of immigration said to me that this is wrong, and that the Liberals were going to bring in legislation to change it. Then, of course, nothing happened.

Bill C-31 is anything but just or fair, and the member should know that. There are individuals whom I have come across who travelled back to their country of origin when the country was safe to return to. At the time they went back, they even had authorization

from Canadian officials to make the trip, but still, once they came back and applied for their citizenship, they actually had cessation applications brought against them. This is wrong.

If the government wants to get out into the universe and tell the world how we are open and humanitarian in our approach, then the government needs to rescind Bill C-31.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Speaker, we have a proven record on refugee protection in recent years. However, as the member said, there are some concerns, and I want to reiterate that we are consulting stakeholders on this file on an ongoing basis.

We want to make improvements to our policies and laws in order to make the system better. Stakeholder consultation is a necessary part of that process. I want to assure the member that the work is ongoing and that we are going to consider making improvements with regard to the matter she raised this evening.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:42 p.m.)

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